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ABSTRACT

There is a growing awareness among some Arab education specialists that the low levels of educational achievement and high illiteracy and low literacy rates in most Arab countries are directly related to the complexities of the standard Arabic language used in formal schooling and non-formal education. The complexities mostly relate to the diglossic situation of the language, which is making reading in Arabic an overly arduous process. There are serious negative educational and social consequences related to these reading difficulties, including feelings of linguistic insecurity by large numbers of youth and young adults when it comes to common acts of social communication and personal expression. If Arabic-speaking societies want to face the challenges of the 21st century, it is asserted that there needs to be a concerted effort to bring about higher levels of linguistic self-confidence and desirable social change. The Arabic language needs urgent language planning strategies to standardize it and make it more accessible to its many speakers. The paper is divided into eight major areas, plus an introduction and conclusion, and include the following: "Education and Development"; "Language and Education"; "Historical Bases of Arabic in Arab Education"; "Diglossia and the Arabic Language"; "Diglossia and 'Education-in-Arabic'"; "Arabic Language Policy and Planning"; "Arabic Language Planning Recommendations"; and "Future of Arabic and Future of Arabic Diglossia." (Contains 73 references and 39 notes.) (KFT)

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Language Education and Human Development

Arabic diglossia and its impact on the quality of education in the Arab region

Discussion paper prepared for
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Abstract

There is a growing awareness among some Arab education specialists that the low levels of educational achievement and high illiteracy (and low literacy) rates in most Arab countries are directly related to the complexities of the standard Arabic language used in formal schooling and in non-formal education. These complexities mostly relate to the diglossic situation of the Arabic language and make reading in Arabic an overly arduous process. There are serious negative educational and social consequences related to these reading difficulties. The Arab region cannot continue to ignore the educational problems raised by its dominant language and the persistent feelings of linguistic insecurity felt by high numbers of youth and adults of the Arabic-speaking community when it comes to the most common acts of social communication and personal expression. If the Arab countries want to prepare their societies to enter the 21st century and face the new challenges of globalization and market economies, it seems that an obvious choice would be to aim at achieving necessary attitudinal changes. These changes would lead to a deliberate and accepted attempt to interfere with their language in order to bring about higher levels of linguistic self-confidence and desirable social change. The Arabic language needs urgent language planning strategies which will standardize it again and provide it with the necessary means for serving all the new challenging language functions of the 21st century.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Aim and scope

The object of the present paper is to give an overview of the current sociolinguistic situation in the Middle-East and North Africa (=MENA) with a focus on the diglossic situation which prevails in the Arabic-speaking countries. It tries to connect the linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of Arabic diglossia to the present circumstances of formal education in the Arab region. The educational structures of the Arab countries are currently characterized by their growing inadequacy and deterioration, the questionable relevance of their curricula, and the unacceptably low level quality of their ouput. Arab schooling suffers from exceptionally high repetition and drop-out rates, especially in poor rural and suburban communities. The study presents a current statistical overview of the educational situation in the countries of the region and tries to identify the language-related 'soft spots' of the educational structure which are in need of urgent reforms.

A number of prominent past reform proposals related to the Arabic language are presented and assessed and a few directions for future language-related research and concrete language reforms are introduced. An important objective of the paper is to show the role played by language in education for the social, cultural, and economic development of the region. Within this perspective, the author's intention is to inform a lay audience of educational economists and statisticians and of education experts at large about the issues and complexities of a language situation which may look deceptively innocuous and simple but which, in reality, is diverse and ambiguous. The purpose is to raise the level of

awareness to inform a meaningful debate around some of the following important issues:
(1) How complex is the situation of the Arabic language and how does that complexity relate to the varied and multiple educational problems in the MENA Region?
(2) What urgent measures are needed to reform the Arabic language and make it more relevant to the changing needs of the MENA societies?
(3) Can an ambitious Arabic language planning policy be used to introduce the desirable and urgently needed reforms in the Arabic-speaking countries?
(4) What acceptable steps can be taken to implement a concrete simplification process which will make Arabic easier to learn, understand, and use by most if not all Arabs?
(5) Can Arabic be used to respond effectively to the region's new development needs or should other partner languages of wider communication, such as English or French, resume their past roles in Arab (and non-Arab) schools implanted in the region as more appropriate languages of instruction for the sciences and modern-age technologies?

1.2 Background information

The MENA Region, according to a UNESCO listing, includes twenty-one Arab States: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. This vast geographical span which totaled 240 million inhabitants in 1993 and will rise to 300 million inhabitants by the year 2000 shares many common characteristics. In 1990, the rural populations of six Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Oman, Sudan, and Yemen) accounted for more than 50% of the total population of the Arab region. Arab countries vary in economic growth and wealth. They also vary in size from about 60 million inhabitants in Egypt to not more than 0.5 million in some Gulf States.

Though they claim a common Arabic-Islamic heritage, Arab countries also vary historically and culturally. One can easily organize them in two major groups: (1) the *Machrek* with four subgroups: (a) Egypt and Sudan; (b) Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan; (c) Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and (d) the Gulf States; and (2) the *Maghreb*, which includes the five countries of the *Arab Maghrebi Union* namely Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. This division, while perhaps debatable, will be used for easy referencing and generalizing purposes.

Membership in the Arab countries' group seems to have been uniquely defined by knowledge and use of the Arabic language. Maamouri (1973) and Paulston (1990) showed the symbolic significance of Arabic for the

states of the region in their search for identity before and after they acquired their independence from Colonial powers. The present paper does not claim complete relevance to all the countries included in the above list. Because Arabic only represents a reduced, though important, influence in their respective educational structures, Djibouti and Somalia will not be included in the study. Some Arab states such as Sudan, Mauritania, Algeria, Iraq, and Morocco to name only a few, include situations of complex linguistic diversity. However, these countries use indiscriminately the defining label of 'Arab' for their citizens who seem to assume therefore, the role of 'speakers and users' of Arabic even when they are not. This is not always problematic for many minority groups in the region. In *the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* Hans Kohn uses a definition of 'nationalism' which does not necessarily include ethnic descent. An 'Arab' is defined in terms of a set of speech habits even when these habits do not belong to his/her own ethnic group. The linguistic focusing which is common to the countries of the Arab region frequently overrides ethnic identity and relates to concepts of linguistic unity and the uniformity of language standards. Because Arabic diglossia, simply defined as the duality of two opposing language variants within a speech community, and the problems of Arab education are going to be mostly ideological, and because Arab countries seem to share the same basic educational problems and follow similar curricula and school-related teaching materials, most of what is presented in this study will be considered relevant to the whole MENA region with few exceptions which will be mentioned when they occur.

2.0 Education and development

The Tanzanian political leader, Julius Nyerere, is often cited for having said that "education is central to the process of development; for people cannot be developed, they can only develop themselves." Advocating the general importance of education for development, UNESCO and other agencies have propagated the claim that economic and development gains depend largely upon and were likely to flow from literacy and the World Bank has always acknowledged that education is the cornerstone of economic and social development and that primary education is its foundation. Bamgbose (1991:71) asserts that "...literacy liberates untapped human potential and leads to increased productivity and better living conditions."

Anderson and Bowman (1965) make the claim that attainment of 40% literacy among the population of a given country is a necessary but not sufficient condition for economic growth. A 70% to 80% literacy rate, at least, has been suggested for rapid economic development. Though it is difficult to ascertain the veracity of these claims, most specialists widely believe that high economic growth rates correlate usually well with highly educated and literate societies. Rates of formal education in

general, and schooling in particular, provide the necessary data for cost-benefit case studies that show these correlations. The field of literacy and Non-Formal Education (=NFE) does not always have the research-based information that will allow for similar claims about correlation with economic growth to convincingly made.

Lockheed and Vespoor (1991:2) claim that advance in economic and social development and alleviation of poverty are among the gains of completed primary education. Other individual and social benefits can be added such as higher individual earnings, greater agricultural productivity, better health and nutrition, lower fertility, and the 'modern' attitudes of openness, civility, consideration of others, and adaptability to change. Literacy and primary education seem to share together the responsibility of ensuring that "every person -- child, youth and adult -- shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs" as stipulated in Article 1 of the World Declaration of Education for All in Jomtien in 1990.

The learning needs of universal primary education (UPE) defined as and equated with basic literacy seem to center mainly on the acquisition and retention of the learning skills of writing, reading, and simple written numeracy. There is a strong assumption that the retention of reading skills leads to educational attainment and lifelong learning. Therefore, reading skills seem to constitute a key goal of educational planning since their acquisition translates into substantial gains in educational attainment.

The importance of reading to literacy and the general quality of education has been brought to the forefront of world politics when it became one of the pillars of the Clinton administration agenda. Alarmed by the nation's Reading Report Card which showed that in 1994, 41% of fourth-graders were reading below grade level, as were 31% of eighth-graders and 25% of high-school seniors, President Clinton announced in August 1996 the America Reads program, a $2.75 billion, five-year initiative designed to ensure that all American children are literate by third grade and possess at age 8 the necessary independent reading skills. This goal is worth the effort because if children cannot read, they cannot do science, math, or social studies.

Years of schooling have been repeatedly used as a proxy measure for estimating literacy in various statistical studies. Literacy attainment, defined as the acquisition of a sustainable level of reading ability through the completion of a given number of years of primary schooling, has become an important indicator of economic growth in the development of countries. However, since conditions in many primary schools of the Arab region and other developing countries are so hopelessly inadequate, one cannot help but wonder at whether the pupils learn anything at all after they regularly attend for two, three, or

four years. Some of the most recent assessment studies show staggeringly low achievement rates for primary schooling in developing countries. In a recent World Bank national household survey in Bangladesh, Greaney (Greaney et al , 1998) found that five years of primary school education resulted in the equivalent of one year of learning achievement and that three years of schooling did not achieve anything at all.

The level of literacy sustainability seems to vary across country and region according to varying social and cultural forces and contexts which may increase or decrease it. The retention of these skills varies also according to the definition of literacy and the particular language(s) and standard(s) of performance used for the acquisition and retention of the skills primary schooling provides. A claim has often been made that the degree of difficulty which is experienced by the learner in the acquisition and retention of reading and other language-related skills in the countries of the Arab region will have a detrimental effect on the quality of education. This negative effect is easily reflected in the educational achievement of individual learners, and particularly, in the degree of built-in self-confidence and the degree of readiness for lifelong learning that the learners will have and use, a given number of years after they leave primary school. Wagner et al. (1989:307-8) link the concept of 'cognitive or literacy retention' to what can be utilized in productive economic activities later on in the lifespan.

J. Oxenham (1980) makes the claim that four to six years of primary schooling for children are required to attain sustainable economic development. In their research in Morocco which shows that schooling has a positive causal effect on literacy and on levels of Arabic reading ability, Lavy, Spratt, and Leboucher (1995:29) seem to believe that 'the completion of primary schooling [in Morocco] can guarantee [only] rudimentary to minimal competence in writing and reading Arabic, as well as minimal ability to perform simple written calculations.' In the same research, the authors predict that in order to reach level 3, which is the highest level in their literacy index, 'an eleven year old girl living in a rural household with illiterate parents and per capita expenditure at the lowest quintile' would need to complete almost 14 years of secular schooling. The completion of four years of secular schooling would only allow her to score 1 on the same literacy index. This means that four years of primary schooling are not necessarily enough to sustain and therefore, guarantee literacy retention. This prediction seems to contradict the general agreement of Arabic literacy providers who maintain that the equivalent of four years of primary schooling represents the minimum threshold level for (adult) literacy in the Arab region. To make things even more questionable, the above mentioned study by Wagner et al. (1989) concludes that relapse into illiteracy may be prevented, at least, if children can acquire a fifth grade education. The question still remains as to how many years of primary schooling can

serve as what Wagner et al. (1989) call "an inoculation" against relapse into illiteracy in the Arabic-speaking countries.

In the context of the assumed correlation between first literacy (in formal schooling or non-formal adult education) and development, the ability to read is fundamental. Poor reading affects the overall learning environment of children and adults. Deciding therefore, on whether real learning is taking place in Arab schools or not as a result of the reading performance the schoolchildren of the MENA region, and on whether an education of quality is being provided to them or not because of that, is going to be a question of utmost importance. This question will be addressed in the framework of an analysis of the Arabic reading process and its relationship to the Arabic language in the formal schooling system of the Arab countries. The objective is to show how this process is affected by some of the inherent features of the language and to make some concrete suggestions about the hidden nature of the crisis of the educational structure in the region.

3.0 Language and Education

3.1. Educational linguistics and language planning. Joshua A. Fishman (1972) believes that language *is* content. As a *means* and a *carrier* of knowledge and learning, language becomes central to the instruction process and its mastery is an indicator of educational success or failure. The choice of the language of education is therefore, an important and sometimes sensitive issue which can lead to hot debates and to education policy changes. Nancy Hornberger (1996:461) captures the relationship of language to education when she writes that "education is the site where, on the one hand, larger social and political forces are reflected in the kinds of educational opportunities offered to speakers of different language varieties and, on the other, language use mediates their participation in those opportunities and, ultimately, their potential contributions to the larger society." How we view issues related to language diversity in the various Arab educational settings and whether we view them as 'problems' or 'resources' (Ruiz:1984) is going to be central to an understanding of Arab education and to the past and present role that the Arabic language played in it.

3.1.1. Education and Language planning *Educational linguistics* studies change in the patterns of language, language functions, and language acquisition and can be divided into two main areas of interest: (a) language planning and (b) language-in-education planning. Though closely related to education, *Language Planning* (=LP) is not limited to it. Numerous attempts have been made to change a certain language or a particular variety of a language, or even specific function(s) of a given language in society. Such changes, which usually meet with varying degrees of resistance and disapproval, are usually described as instances of language planning. The assignment of different functions to different

languages or varieties of a language in a community has become part of modern nation-building, a trend in which language is synonymous with nation because language becomes the basic expression of nationalistic feelings. According to R. Wardaugh (1986:336) LP is a deliberate attempt to interfere with (a) a language status with regard to some other language ; or (b) a variety of its internal condition with a view to changing that condition; or (c) both of these since they are not mutually exclusive. Kloss (1969), Wardaugh (1986), Cooper (1989), and others identify two types of language planning one that relates to *status* (Status Planning) and the second to *corpus* (Corpus Planning).

3.1.1.1 Education and status planning *Status Planning* (=SP) changes the function of a language or a variety of a language. When those changes occur, people are often denied the use of that language in education, official communication, or government. Once established, the standard language becomes the gatekeeper which limits upward socio-economic mobility to those who have acquired it. All social groups do not have equal access to acquiring the standard through an extended, mostly elite education. Language proficiency in the standard functions enhances and reinforces social stratification among users of the language. Schools play a critical role because they teach the standard and promote academic learning through it. Status changes are hotly contested and leave strong residual feelings when they take place rapidly. Status planning decisions reflect important societal choices made by governments that usually advocate policies of linguistic uniformity as a necessary adjunct to centralization, political control, and perhaps the coordination of economic development. The expansion of a standardized code through education encourages uniformity not only of language but also of culture and ideology.

3.1.1.2 Education and corpus planning *Corpus Planning* (=CP) seeks to develop a variety of a language or a language, usually to standardize it by providing it with the means and tools for serving as many functions as possible in society. Corpus planning deals with the changes within language while status planning usually concerns the relationship between languages. Corpus planning focuses on (a) elements of *codification* such as the development of orthographies, adoption of a new script or of spelling reforms, writing of grammar, dictionaries and terminologies along with the coining of new terms, or (b) on elements of *elaboration* which include the development of a literature and the deliberate cultivation of the uses of the language for government, education, trade, banking, and many more societal functions.

Language planning decisions are vital for education as their presence or absence will bear a considerable weight on the structure and its results. According to Terence G. Wiley (1996:130), education provides the major means of promoting language acquisition planning through the promotion of national standard languages which must be explicitly

taught in schools as opposed to acquired in the home environment. Wiley (1996:103-104) notes that 'official language decisions are imposed as explicit policies handed down by governments. Unofficial policies, which also have influence, result from the pronouncements of language academies or flow from the works of great writers or various authorities such as lexicographers, influential publishers, or religious reformers.' In trying to define a conceptual framework for LP as a field, Wiley (1996:109) reaches an interesting set of questions which relate to who defines language problems and how they become problems and for whom.

In order to get the best understanding of the 'problem' of the Arabic language, one has to link it with the current situation of education in the Arab countries. To that end, a presentation of the current state of formal and non-formal education in the region will be made. It will then be followed by an examination of the historical bases of Arabic in connection with the diverse patterns and phases of Arab education.

4.0 Education overview in the Arab region

This section presents a quick overview of the current situation of formal and non-formal education in the Arab region. It is not intended to be long or exhaustive and is not aimed at covering all aspects of formal education. The objective is (a) to give a sense of what seems to be the major achievements and weaknesses of Arab primary schooling, and (b) to give an indication of the differentiated state of illiteracy in the region. The combined picture will serve to indicate the responsibility of the Arabic language in the educational problems of instruction in Arabic.

4.1 Formal education in the Arab region

The profile of Arab education varies across and within countries. All Arab educational systems, however, seem to share the following negative characteristics: (a) a questionable relevance, (b) an unacceptably low quality, and (c) high repetition and dropout rates, especially in the poor rural and urban communities.

4.1.1 School Enrollment. Even though the Arab region registered a rapid expansion of its educational system with enrollments increasing by 85% from 1975 to 1991, the proportion of school-age children who are left out of the system is still extremely high. UNESCO educational statistics for 1995 and the 1996 Unicef-MENARO Basic Education Profile shows that the total primary school enrollment increased from 30 to 35.2 million during the 1990-95 period and will reach an estimated 39 million by the year 2000. A differentiated view of enrollment rates shows that 12 Arab countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates) have

achieved acceptable levels of enrollment of more than 80%; two (Libya and Saudi Arabia) have enrollment rates which vary between 60% and 80%, while a remaining three (Morocco, Sudan, Yemen) score below the 60% rate.

4.1.2 Out-of-school children. Definite progress seems to have been achieved over the past 6 to 7 years by the countries of the region towards the Jomtien EFA goals. However, no significant decrease can been recorded in the overall number of out-of-school children in the Arab States which is currently estimated at 8.2 million. Moreover, an estimated 9 million school-age children (two thirds girls) will still not be enrolled by the year 2000 representing 22% of the school-age population (age 6-11). According to Unicef (1994), the proportion of school-age children left out of the educational system is highly differentiated and varies across gender and country. The lowest rates (10% and less) were recorded in U.A.E, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Qatar, and Bahrain. Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and Libya have rates varying between 10% and 25%, while the percentages shown for the four following countries, Saudi Arabia 38%, Sudan 47%, Morocco 48%, and Yemen 53% dramatically highlight the 'wastage' problem and the unacceptable situation of the large numbers of children who are left out of the formal system of education.

4.1.3 Gender disparity in primary schooling Most Arab countries have improved enrollment levels for girls at an overall Net Enrollment Ratio of 80% which increases the overall girls' share in primary schooling and makes it advance from 43.6% in 1990 to 45.4% in 1995. There is a slight gender disparity at the level of enrollment which is most noticeable in the cases of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria and Iraq. A more important gender differentiation seems to appear at the level of the higher proportions of school-age girls who are left out of the education system. Saudi Arabia (44%), Sudan (50%), Morocco (56%), and Yemen (66%), along with Palestine (no available statistic) seem to be still facing serious problems of access and equity in their respective educational structures.

4.1.4 Drop out and completion It is difficult to present acceptable and credible measures of repetition and drop-out rates for the Arab region. The fact that rural Arab children enter school too late and abandon it too early remains a general characteristic feature of Arab primary schooling. According to a UNESCO statistic, survival rates to grade four, which as previously mentioned, has always been officially considered the 'threshold level' for a sustainable literacy acquisition in most Arab States, rose to 93% in 1986. Recent important progress was recorded in the percentage of first graders reaching grade four; ratios increased from 91.06% in 1987 to 94.44% in 1995. Here again, there exists an important gender gap between enrollment and end-of-cycle completion rates which shows a major disparity in the following Arab countries: Tunisia (20%),

Morocco (25%), Sudan (37%), Iraq (42%), and Yemen (45%). When looking at school completion in the Arab region, the following statistics seem to indicate very high attrition rates. In Bahrain and the U.A.E, more than 16% of enrolled school children completed primary education and more than 10% followed post-secondary education. In Tunisia and Egypt, between 10% and 15% completed primary education but only 2% to 5% followed post-secondary education. In Sudan and Mauritania, less than 4% completed primary school education and less than 1.5% followed post-secondary education. High drop-out rates mostly affect girls in rural areas. Unicef statistics (1994) show that the six countries that record the highest girls' drop-out rates are, in decreasing order, as follows: Sudan (most drop-outs), Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, and Jordan.

4.1.5 School repetition Drop-out rates are seriously aggravated by the school year repetition rates which manifest considerable variation by country and gender. The International Bureau of Education-UNICEF statistics for primary school repetition based on the 1990 figures supplied to UNESCO, indicated that in the Arab States (10 countries studied), the repetition trend appears to show a fall in the overall percentage and an increase in the actual number of repetitions, with the exception of Jordan and Iraq (allowing for the fact that data for Iraq are for 1988, prior to the Gulf War). This study includes seven Arab countries among those which have totaled more than 100,000 repeaters. The highest percentages of repeaters were recorded for Tunisia (18% overall with 16% for girls); Iraq (16% overall with 13% for girls), Morocco (12% overall with 10% for girls), and Saudi Arabia (11% overall with 8% for girls). Drop-out and repetition rates which characterize the systems of education in most Arab States inevitably affect the overall efficiency of the system by increasing its 'wastage output' and squandering the considerable resources spent by most Arab governments on education.

4.1.6 Repetition and primary schooling standards The drop-out problem relates to the absenteeism usually associated with conditions of poverty and low income. Sometimes, it is related to the difficulties experienced by a considerable number of school children in progressing from one grade to another at the right speed and in getting full benefit from the time spent at school. Repetition of courses and years in the early grades of primary school seems to be closely connected to learning and to school failure. Analyzing the repetition phenomenon, the International Bureau of Education study makes the following points:
(a) There is an obvious connection between repetition in the first grades of primary education and the learning of reading and writing;
(b) there is a need for significant changes in the teaching of reading and writing and for a thorough overhaul of the parameters and traditional practices usually applied to first literacy in formal and non formal situations;

(c) there is also, a need for greater awareness of the impact of linguistic factors on school performance in general and on literacy in particular; and finally,
(d) the introduction of more harmony between standards of socialization and access to knowledge and learning styles in the school system is both necessary and urgent.

In a study that relates to drop-out and repetition rates, W. Haddad (1979) highlights the link between school standards and the efficiency of learning acquisition. He suggests that setting higher standards tends to result in an increase in repetition and drop-out rates, while lowering standards will reduce these inefficiencies. However, the abandonment of standards destroys the major objective of schooling. Haddad does not single out any specific subjects of the school curriculum, but it is safe to say that language, both as subject matter and as medium of instruction, and mathematics will certainly rate high on the list of critical skills. In view of the above IBE remarks about the association of repetition with the learning of reading and writing, Haddad's remarks may lead to the assumption that we will take in the present study which makes the claim that the standards of reading and writing in Arab schools may be too high and overly difficult. Whether and to what extent this statement applies to the situation of Arab education would have to be further explored in the present study.

4.1.7 Repetition, drop-out rates, and basic reading skills There are few studies assessing the difficulty of the Arabic reading process in or outside the Arab region. While deploring the total absence of educational assessments in the Arab region, S. Heyneman (1997) noted that only Jordan had participated in an international assessment of educational progress (ETS, 1992). He observed that on top of their low performances in science and math, the tested Jordanian 13-year-olds had acquired less information throughout their educational cycle than in the 14 other countries sampled. One can add to Heyneman's remarks the results reported in the 1995 Unicef-MENARO Basic Education Profile of the Middle East and North Africa. In this general educational profile report, quotes from an assessment of learning achievement of Jordanian 4th graders done by the National Center for Educational Research and Development (NCERD) show that the average percent correct on the Arabic Language Test (reading, dictation, and grammar) was 54.19% with an even lower differentiated average for male students with performance totaling not more than 51% as against 57% for girls. The Arabic language test was given to 4908 fourth-grade students in 205 schools representing all educational sectors and governorates in Jordan. If we consider that Jordan has one the highest educational and literacy percentages in the Arab region, these results seem to confirm the above assumption that Arabic reading and writing are going to be important factors in the degradation of education in the Arab region. In their study on retention of basic skills acquired in primary schools in Egypt, Hartley and Swanson (1986) seem to

confirm the idea that there is a special additional difficulty in the learning of basic skills in Arabic. Commenting on John Oxemham's (1980) prevision of at least four years of schooling for acquisition by children of permanent literacy, they observe that "in Egypt, this is clearly insufficient -- not only for drop-outs but also for continuers."

One may add that in the Maghreb countries of Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, where there is a bilingual system of education, the existence of French in primary schooling seems to be one of the additional causes of early dropping out. Gallagher (1964:142) estimates that since four thousand hours of instruction are considered to be necessary for full mastery of French in the French primary school system and since only half of that total at best, is provided by the Maghrebi schools independently of the year of introduction of this subject matter, French is going to be a constant problem in education, mostly in the rural and the socio-economically deprived areas. When looking at the situation of French in the primary school curricula of Algeria, Morocco, or Tunisia today, it does not seem that Gallagher's remark has lost any of its pertinence or actuality.

4.1.8 Cost of Arab education S. Heyneman (1997:10) notes that the average Arab State spent US $267 per student in 1990, which is about the same as the average country in Latin America but five times less than most OECD countries (US$ 1,327). Heyneman establishes the comparison between primary and tertiary education and shows that while OECD countries spend about twice the amount on a student in higher education as they do on a student in primary schooling, Gulf States spend 4 times more, Tunisia 9 times more, Jordan 14 times more, and Morocco 15 times more. Heyneman concludes that '...in general it might be assumed that countries which spend over 10 times or more per student in higher education have neglected the quality of compulsory education.'

It is certain that the countries of the Middle East and North Africa will have to commit additional and substantial resources to education, both formal and non-formal, over the next generations if they want to provide improved educational opportunities for their children, youth, and adults. When looking at ways of reforming their educational structures, Arab countries should give greater attention to Heyneman's concluding remarks about their bias towards tertiary education and neglect of basic education (formal and non-formal). Replacing their focus on primary schooling and literacy problems will most probably draw them closer to addressing the real problems of the early stages of education which relate mostly to vital language-related issues. Some of these issues, such as reforming Arabic or improving the quality of the Arabic reading process, seem to be important focusing areas where appropriate investments should be made for urgent remedial answers.

The following sections of this study will be devoted to the the description and analysis of those problems.

4.2 Literacy and illiteracy in the Arab region

The number of illiterates in the Arab region reached some 50 million in 1970, which accounted for 73.5% of the total Arab population aged 15 years and over. This statistic increased to 61 million in 1990 and to 65 million in 1995, although the percentage of illiterates actually dropped to 48% or less as a result of population growth. The projected number of illiterates for the year 2000 will reach 68 million for an estimated population of 289 million. The projected illiteracy rate will be 38.1% which represents 43% of the projected population aged 15 years and over.

4.2.1 Regional and geographic disparity According to the UNESCO 1995 World Education Report country illiteracy statistics, there is a noticeable regional discrepancy within and across the Arab States. In the Maghreb, we face four very different illiteracy situations: Mauritania (62.3%), Morocco (56.3%), Algeria (38.4%), and Tunisia (33.3%). In the Machrek, a similar discrepancy exists between three groups: (a) Lebanon (7.6%); Jordan (13.4%), and the Gulf States (Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates) which average 22% or less; (b) Syria (29.2%), Saudi Arabia (37.2%), Iraq (42.0%), and Egypt (48.6%); and (c) Sudan (53.9%), Yemen, and Oman for which there are no available statistics but which seem to have the highest illiteracy rates in the region.

4.2.2 Gender disparity Illiteracy rates for women reached percentages in the higher eighties and nineties immediately after many Arab countries became independent in the fifties and sixties. There was, however, a marked improvement in the education of girls in the past two decades, which made the average female illiteracy rates drop from 86.3% in 1970 to 49.4% in 1994. Current illiteracy rates by gender for Tunisia (21.4% male and 45.4% female) and Egypt (36.4% male and 61.2% female) show that despite obvious other differences, the two countries share the same gender gap proportions. Arab countries share similar gender roles in the home and similar Arab-Islamic cultural values and traditions. However, the break-down of the illiteracy rates into age-specific rates shows that the highest proportion of female illiterates are in the 50 plus years bracket. Most Arab States seem to share this statistic. While older illiterate women seem to be a common feature to all Arab States, younger girls' illiteracy is highest in Saudi Arabia (44%), Sudan (50%), Morocco (56%), and Yemen (66%).

The lowest levels of female illiteracy for 1995 were recorded in Lebanon (9.7%), Qatar (20.1%), the United Arab Emirates (20.2%), Jordan (20.8%) and Kuwait (25.1%). These statistics show an important advance in encouraging female literacy mostly in the Gulf States. In Qatar and the

U.A.E., the number of male illiterates is higher than the number of female illiterates. In Kuwait, both percentages are very close and the gender gap seems to be perceptibly narrowing. However, this is not the case in three of the most literate Arab countries where gender disparity is still persistent and shows serious equality and access issues. In Lebanon, we find 9.7% of female illiterates in 1995 as against 5.3% male illiterates for the same year. Jordan, which has the second lowest illiteracy rate in the Arab World (13.4%), shows a differentiated illiteracy rate of 6.6% male as against 20.8% female for the same year. Syria had a total illiteracy rate of 29.2% in 1995 which breaks down into 14.3% for male illiterates and 44.2% for female counterparts. UNESCO projections are that the average female illiteracy rate in the Arab region will reach an estimated 49.4% by the year 2000. There is a real risk that 50% of adult Arab women will remain illiterate at the end of this century unless educational opportunities and access are increased.

4.2.3 Socio-economic disparity There is an important disparity between the urban and rural areas of the Arab region. More than 55% of Arab illiterates live in rural areas that cover more than 60% of the land. In 1990 the rural populations of six Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Oman, Sudan, and Yemen) accounted for more than 50% of the total Arab population. This proportion is rapidly changing as urban migration is increasing. The rural populations of Arab States will drop to a mere 46% of the total population figure by the year 2000. The urbanization of significant percentages of the rural populations in some Arab countries will lead to a marginalization of those populations which will affect the nature of the literacy problem. It may also impact the educational process of the children and youth who will have to face new challenges with the looming danger of unemployment.

The above cross-regional comparison reveals a crisis that demands the urgent attention of Arab policymakers and education experts. It is all the more alarming when one realizes that the Arab States have regularly spent over the past two decades more than an average 5% of their GNP on education.

4.2.4 Literacy and policy efforts in the Arab region

Illiteracy has been viewed as a social issue because it seems to have an impact on the larger standards of living of the young Arab societies and 'combating' it was part of the necessary politically correct effort of removing poverty, ignorance, disease, and inequality of opportunity. Because of the unstable political climate in the Arab region and of continuous negotiations of the 'social contract' with ever-changing power representatives, illiteracy has often emerged as a political priority in socially oriented regimes. A few erratic and short-lived literacy actions appeared and quickly died away after initial social mobilization flames

vanished. When it is not viewed as an educational problem that can only be tackled by the expansion of a more generalized and universal primary schooling, 'illiteracy' is considered part of the activities of Arab ministries of social works where it is mostly associated with national social charity, solidarity action, and the general alleviation of poverty.

The repeated failures of the mission-mode, time-bound national literacy campaigns led to the creation, as early as 1964, of an Arab task-force and of the Arab regional Literacy Organization (ARLO) in 1972, within the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) for the co-ordination of the Arab literacy effort. Policy decisions such as the "Arab Eradication of Illiteracy Strategy" were approved in 1976, followed in 1978, by the Arab Strategy for the Development of Education, the establishment of the Arab Fund for Literacy and Adult Education in 1980, and as late as 1989, the Plan of Action for the universalization of primary education and the eradication of illiteracy. The problem of the Arabic language was raised in that context and discussions of its necessary reforms were started in 1964 at the Alexandria Conference and in the numerous meetings that followed it but with no consequent action.

4.2.5 Need for conceptual shift in Arab basic education

Policymakers and literacy providers in formal and non-formal settings should perhaps be made to understand the nature of the literacy problem in order to make the necessary conceptual shift from trying to 'eradicate illiteracy' to the more productive job of implanting literacy in youth and adults. The Arabic language only uses *'ummiyya* for "illiteracy" and *maHw 'al-'ummiyya* "eradication of illiteracy/anti-illiteracy" for the English term *literacy*. *Qiraa'iyya*, from the Arabic verb *qara'a* "to read," can bring forward the appropriate association with reading which is essential to all definitions of literacy. Moving from 'illiteracy eradication' to the promotion and nurturing of a reading culture in Arab schools and in the out-of-school environment might help break the barriers between formal and non-formal education and bring about significant benefits to the region's development. This is not however, an easy task as many problems which are inherent to the Arabic language may hinder this process and make it difficult to achieve.

5.0 Historical bases of Arabic in Arab education

5.1. Islamic education and Arabic diglossia The Arabic language is the chief instrument and vehicle of the sacred message of Islam. The analysis of its roles and functions over the past 14 centuries has taken a predominantly ideological orientation because of this. The use of Arabic for the promotion of Islamic education and the advocacy of knowledge and lifelong learning during the spread of Islam over a vast empire expanding from the confines of Asia to the deserts of Africa and the Atlantic Ocean, helped the geographical spread of the language and

rapidly established its hold over vast and diverse ethnolinguistic populations. Converting to Islam meant accepting a functional Arabization and an elementary form of Arabic literacy which allowed its users to achieve little more than going through the daily requirements of the creed. The relatively low presence of native linguistic competence in Arabic in the remote parts of the growing empire and the frequent contact situations with indigenous languages led Arabic to unruly developments.

In spite of the scholarly work of the early Arab grammarians which meant to 'fixate' it, the Arabic language underwent a slow but inevitable process of change. The approximate nature of the transitional language stages of the new Arabic speakers introduced a great amount of 'instability' into the language. This unstable situation resulted from the interaction between the different linguistic varieties of the language, already evidenced during the Prophet's life, but also from the incorporation of emerging linguistic norms into the Arabic of the first standardization. A gap was formed between that standardized language of Islam as recorded in the Quran and related religious writings and the Arabic language commonly used by Arabs and non-Arabs alike. This language duality was reflected in the debate between Al-Kufa and Al-Basra, two major schools of Arabic grammar, around issues of language 'degradation' and 'corruption' and the consequent issues of usage over linguistic purity and correctness.

The demands of the Islamic religion and the characteristics of its development played a fundamental role in widening the gap between the 'Arabic of the scriptures' and the emerging linguistic variants. This finally led to a higher valuation of the written forms of the language over its oral forms and ultimately, to the dichotomy which currently exists in the Arabic language. Therefore, one could easily assume that this situation, to which we will refer later as 'diglossia,' could in fact be considered the result of Quranic literacy and the use of the 'sacred written text' for Quranic instruction in an environment where literacy was insignificant.

5.2 Quranic literacy and the emergence of *Classical Arabic*

What started as Quranic literacy focusing on the teaching of the beliefs and practices of Islam in mosques and religious shrines (zaouias), developed in the days of the early ruling dynasties into the full-fledged, two-tiered *kuttaab*-mosque system of Islamic education. This form of education focused on the reading and study of a whole body of written materials which included *hadith* and *sunna* (the Prophet's sayings and his life story), *shariaa* (a body of Islamic legal texts), and also a rich literature.

Quranic literacy seems to have had little instrumental value for the common people. It greatly benefited a minority of privileged users all belonging to the class of 'religious professionals' who monopolized the existing societal functions of the Arabic-Islamic societies. The transferability of literacy competency was limited to religious forms of learning within an attitude of strict adherence to the Arabic standard of the Quran, the privileged medium of Islamic instruction. This Arabic language, to which we will refer later as 'Classical Arabic' (CA), emerged, it seems, from a tradition of Islamic instruction which became gradually characterized by the use of the most formal and sometimes most hermetic stylistic registers of the language.

The accessibility of Islamic beliefs and concepts to growing numbers of newly converted peoples around the Mediterranean basin, in Africa and in Asia, must have been seriously hampered by the difficulties of the Arabic language used in religious contexts when compared to the spoken contact language of Arab conquerors. Fägerlind and Saha (1989:152) showed the importance of updating the language of religious activities, usually the main tool of literacy and education, in their description of the history of literacy reforms in Sweden. They showed that after translating the Catechism of Luther in 1537 and the Bible in 1541 into Swedish, the church authorities in charge of educating the Swedish people, decided less than two centuries later that they needed to update the language of their religious documents. This concern led to another linguistically-updated publication of the Bible and of Luther's Catechism in 1689. What worked well in Sweden was and still is totally unthinkable in the context of Arabic. Any decision involving the language or text of the Quran would have transgressed an important taboo and the Islamic belief that the Quran represents *klaam* rabbi, "the words of God."

Arabs viewed the Arabic language as sacred and insisted on safeguarding its original purity and unity from any variation which could lead to dangerous religious deviation. The lack of receptive attitude towards language change barred all attempts at reforming the language in the direction of those who spoke it. It also led to the prevailing traditional ideology which has validated and preserved until now the cultural and historical uniqueness of Arabic by manifesting a highly pronounced sensitivity for purism and a low level of tolerance (and even some disdain) towards mistakes and error of common language use. The second relates to the use of a methodology of memorization and rote-learning which characterized centuries of Islamic instruction and delivered little more than a rudimentary knowledge of the decoding skills to generations of semi-literate Arabs who needed those skills for the continuous reactualization of the memorized verses of the Quran. It seems that Arab education is still suffering from this culturally dominant and mimetic pedagogical orientation.

5.3 Arab education and the politics of Arabization

Looking at the Arab world over the past two centuries of its tumultuous history, one can truly say that the ideological and symbolic concept of *Arabization* played a key role in the life of the region on the social, cultural, educational, and political levels. *Arabization* relates directly to the symbolic significance, status, roles, and functions of the Arabic language. It relates to the attitudes of Arabs and non-Arabs towards the Arabic language and their valuation of its importance for and influence on the changing Arab societies. Since Arabic seems to be completely interlocked with the sacred area of religious culture and with the turbulent Arab political events of the diverse MENA region, it is only natural that Arabization will have a differentiated definitional framework which will reflect the specific nature of each of the major areas of the Arabic-speaking world.

This section will describe the dominant paradigms which have characterized the relationship between the Arabic language and the social, educational, cultural, and political facets in both the Maghreb and the Machrek. It will show the specific characteristics of each region and try to connect them to the realities of the present educational context.

5.3.1 Arabic in the colonial period: Tradition versus Modernity

The first Arabization followed the demise of the Turkish domination of the Arab region and more than five centuries of stagnation. The revival of the Arabic language started after the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt which ignited a renaissance movement in the Arab region. The focus of this awakening was on the modernization of both the Arab society and its language. Arabic replaced Turkish as the official language in Egypt and elsewhere, in the region. Most of the local reform actions which were started in the 19th century and which were aimed at opening the Arab region to modernity and the West were suddenly stopped by the French and British colonial occupation of most Arab countries.

Arabic which initially benefited from its contact with Europe and the Western culture through the translation of a significant sample of literature, was soon replaced by English and French which both became the administrative languages of colonial occupation respectively in the Machrek and the Maghreb. This seems to have taken place more systematically in North Africa than in the Machrek. The French wanted to deeply root the norms of their 'mission civilisatrice' in the North African countries, and they tried to 'disfigure' Arabic and the indigenous cultures in Algeria and Morocco. Their efforts had more impact because of their significant physical presence in the region. The British were less involved it seemed, with language matters and left most of the local

education structures to local authorities. As a result, Arabic had less competition in the countries of the Machrek than in the Maghreb where it was, and still seems to be, in a conflictual situation with the French language and culture.

Colonialization meant a decreased role for Arabic as the language of instruction. It also meant the institution of a secularized form of education which disrupted the existing structures. Quranic education and the traditional 'kuttaab-mosque' structure weakened as a result of this intrusion to the point that it finally almost disappeared from most Arab countries where it was replaced by a typical three-tiered educational system. This new education structure adopted different learning goals and objectives and focused mainly on answering civil service needs.

The growing acceptance of western values led to a renewed call for the promotion of a parallel Arabic-based school structure which was needed to oppose the 'public school system.' Nationalist forces organized 'medrassas' and financed 'free schools' in various parts of the Arab region to counter this threat to the Arabic-Islamic culture. Where the traditional educational structure remained, the intruding foreign influence of the new schooling system led to a mixture of the traditional Islamic curriculum with varying degrees of Westernized school content.

The social revolution following the aftermath of World War II led to decolonization, political independences and the consequent aspirations of creating new nation states which would fight poverty and ignorance and provide a national form of education which uses the language and culture of the people. Arabization became the political demand of Arab populations in all Arab countries and mostly in the countries of North Africa which have been most deeply affected by the presence of French in their educational structures.[1]

Because of the existence in the Arab region of ideological demands for the rapid Arabization of the educational systems and the rapid displacement of foreign vehicular languages of instruction to Arabic, Arabization translated into two differentiated concepts: a 'corpus planning Arabization' in the Machrek and a 'status planning Arabization' in the Maghreb.

5.3.2 Arabization in the Machrek

In the absence of any serious competition to Arabic in the domains of public education and government, the concept of Arabization in the Machrek mainly focused on the ability of Arabic to cope with the demands of educational promotion, scientific development, and industrialization. Arabization was conceptually equated with the modernization of the Arabic language and the strengthening of its

efficiency in education and in official government use. It dealt with two major reform dimensions: corpus planning decisions related to the lexicon and various status planning positions which related mostly to the rejection of colloquial Arabic.

5.3.2.1 Arabic lexicon: Efforts at reforming Arabic by enriching and strengthening its vocabulary go back in history to when Arabs undertook the task of transmitting Greek thought and showed inventiveness in mathematics, medicine, and astrology. In more recent times, efforts at revivifying the Arabic language were started again at the end of the 19th century by the Arab Renaissance movement (*nahdha*). Though it has delayed the modernization of Arabic and made it perhaps more complex in parts of the Arab region, colonialism brought into the region the necessary European influence and the ingredients of scientific and technological knowledge. The objectives of the post-independence Arabization reforms in the Machrek (*ta'riib*) mainly aimed at giving Arabic the capacity to express technological concepts with precision and clarity and to help with the promotion of scientific thinking by translating the most recent Western production and updating the terminological and lexical fund.[2]

5.3.2.2 Arabic written production standards The second major issue of Arabization in the Machrek dealt with the quality of the written production in Arabic by Arabs of all ages in and out of schools, in most domains of life activities. This special focusing on mistakes and incorrect usage signalled an early awareness of the serious dichotomy between the 'Arabic language ' and colloquial Arabic. This interest showed a growing concern about the spread of error in the formal Arabic language production which was thought to be detrimental to development. Because of the importance of this issue to national goals, an important political and cultural battle raged for more than half a century in Egypt and Syria, between the Classicists and those who opposed them. The debate focused on two opposing solutions which were suggested for the elimination of the problem or at least a reduction of its effects.

5.3.2.3 The Classicists' position can be summarized in what follows: (1) Insistance on the preservation of Classical Arabic and on the need to raise it to the status of a naturally spoken language; (2) strong desire to have Classical Arabic replace the colloquials as the common spoken language; (3) questionning of the value of the colloquial language and rejection of any change in the Classical language; (4) commonly shared belief that the spread of education and universal literacy could play an important role in classicizing the colloquial language ; (5) trust that the Arab mass media will help in gradually bridging the gap between the two forms of Arabic (6) firm belief that strong language planning decisions could accelerate the spread of Classical Arabic and extend its use to all the major activities of Arab societies.[3] The Classicists' views and positions are best reflected in the work and linguistic programs of the various Arab academies.

However, this conservative stand is not shared by all. A few Classicists tolerate the study and use of the colloquial and accept the need for modifications and enrichment. Altoma (1970:693) criticizes the Classicists' ideological choice of ignoring linguistic principles, their strong and constant opposition to the use of the Colloquials which runs counter to several educational, literary, and political trends, and finally, for putting the blame for educational failure in the 'correct' use of *fusha* (name usually used for the standard written Arabic used in the literature and other cultural documents) on curriculum, textbooks, students, or the lack of qualified teachers.

5.3.2.4 The proponents of colloquial Arabic Those who advocated the use of the colloquials were a relatively small group when compared to their opponents. There were numerous calls for the promotion of a variety (rarely a specific one) of spoken Arabic as the standard language which should replace Classical Arabic. Some of them advocated important modifications from the colloquial into the Classical language mostly in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, and sometimes, orthography. Elaborating on this last position, some linguists expressed a preference for a 'cultivated middle language' which has a real occurrence in Arab communication. *Educated Arabic*, which is a mixture of CA and colloquial Arabic, is mostly based on the language forms spoken by educated Arabs in situations of linguistic accommodation.[4]

5.3.3 Arabization in the Maghreb

In the Maghreb, Arabization meant moving away from French as the language of education and adopting an Arabic-vehicle for most if not all the curriculum. Moderate North African countries such as Tunisia and Morocco decided against a hasty Arabization of curriculum and methods and for a gradual mutation of a twofold task of extending education while Arabizing. The educational reformers of these two countries chose the expediency of recognizing French as the preferred language of instruction in order to continue to meet their immediate operational needs in education, communication, the conduct of commerce, industrialization, and the provision of internal and external security.

Having spent more than forty years experiencing the bilingual-bicultural model of education and having invested very important portions of their national budgets towards the development of education in order to bring about socio-economic returns and a higher level of participation for their people, the North African countries seem to be going through the quality crisis of an institutionalized bilingual education which is characterized by the growing degradation of school standards and results.

Maghrebi inteliectuals seem to have been in favor of bilingual education because they felt that the Arabic language was not capable of bringing about the necessary modern paradigm shifts which would move people

away from the traditional ideological attitudes and valuation of the past. French had always been seen as an open window on modernity and development through a transfer of technology and scientific achievement. Arabic seemed to lead sometimes towards cultural ideologies which could be dangerous to consolidation and achievement of nationhood. Because it adopted the view that Arabic was and needed to be the common language of a 'unified' Arab political entity, Arabization was felt at times to be somewhat dangerous by the Maghrebi political elite who feared its connection to the political agendas of Arab nationalism.

The acceptance of bilingual-bicultural education in the Maghreb instead of strict Arabization seems to stem from a political choice much more than from a cultural one. This choice does not seem to involve either a clear-cut cultural orientation or a synthesis of traditional and modern values. It creates however, a dichotomy in the system of education which is more and more reflected in the growing gap between, on the one hand, the ruling classes and the urban bourgeoisie and on the other, the rural and disadvantaged classes who feel handicapped by a system of education where failure comes in a good part from a language which is foreign to them and has very little currency in their own cultural environment. For growing masses of Maghrebi populations in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, French constituted and continues to constitute an important obstacle towards upward social mobility.

The final word on the situation of Arabization in the Maghreb is that the situation is still somewhat confused and confusing. To the rural classes who are unhappy because they want a complete Arabization of the educational structure, one can add the unhappiness of the marginalized urban populations who migrated towards the cities where they discovered that nothing will help them more in the job-market and improve their chances of employment than a knowledge of French.

This leads to the final observation that a reverse displacement from French to Arabic for the total and complete implementation of an Arabization policy in the secondary and tertiary curricula in the sciences and related fields in the Maghreb should be considered with caution. The disadvantage of using French should not be replaced by the disadvantage of the substitution of Arabic for French. This could still accrue to the advantage of the more urbanized and well-to-do segments of the population who are more likely to have had contact with the 'imported' language and whose children have far more opportunities to master it.

Arabization in the Maghreb is a serious problem with varying degrees of actuality. Within what appears as a studied measure of bureaucratic inertia, we witness from time to time situations of official posturing where reaffirmation of the urgent needs for Arabization is reiterated.

There is a feeling that Arabization has sometimes been used for demagogic purposes by members of the political classes who advocate its urgent implementation but then prefer to send their own children to foreign-based schools or even abroad to guarantee a quality education that they feel an Arabic-based education does not to provide anymore.

Arabs seem to be slowly sliding away from the forces and tensions of nationism (the desire to maintain the secured borders and territoriality of nationhood) and nationalism (the desire to express ethnic identity and solidarity) and moving closer towards the internationalism of economic forces. This fully dynamic situation is changing the targets in the lives of Arab people from the paradigms of the ideological and identitarian valuation of the post-colonial period to economic interest and the demand for socioeconomic returns and participation in the tenets of consumerism with its focus on industrial goods, global cultural patterns, and the value of cash. Within this perspective, a paradigm shift in attitudes to language choice will certainly lead to a paradigm shift in Arabization which will necessarily affect the relationship of Arab education to the choice of the language of instruction.

5.4 Arab schoolchildren profiles

In order to give a touch of reality to the previous description and place it within a more concrete presentation, two vignettes will follow. Both are taken from a Maghreb context and they both cover the primary and secondary schooling situation in Tunisia. Both vignettes illustrate the various problems described in the above section. Hela and her friends represent a 10 to13 year age range while Khaled and his friends represent a 14 to 16 year age range. Even though not all of the elements included in the vignettes will admittedly apply to the diversified situations and categories of schooled Arab children, many of them certainly will. It is with that view in mind that they are presented.

5.4.1 Vignette 1: Hela and her friends

Hela is a sixth-grade primary school student living in Tunis. She spends her summers in Nabeul with her grandmother. Her two best friends there are Hiba and Meriem. Hiba lives in Nabeul all year round and is the same age as Hela. Meriem is a year older and lives in La Marsa during the school year. Hela goes to a private school where she started French and Arabic at the same time. She has more than 20 hours of classes in Arabic and about 10 hours in French a week. All the subjects other than French, such as Math and Biology, are taught in Fusha. Sometimes the teacher explains things in Arbi, but he students often have to speak in Fusha. Hela does not like Fusha as much as Arbi, it feels

too alien to her. She even likes French better than Fusha. Meriem's classes are a lot like Hela's. She prefers French and often uses French words when she's speaking Arbi. She thinks it makes her sound cool, like an adult. Hiba, on the other hand, didn't start French until the third grade. Even though she now has the same number of hours of each language as Hela does, she prefers Arabic (both fusha and Arbi) to French and reads more Arabic books.

The three girls play together and watch television. Their favorite shows are Saoussen, which is in Fusha, and Les Schtroumfs, which is in French. Sometimes, when they play, they pretend to be the cartoon characters and try to sound like them. Hiba likes playing Saoussen best, because she doesn't play well when they speak in French. Meriem prefers Les Schtroumfs because her Fusha is poor. They usually just speak Arbi together. After the summers over, Hela and Meriem go back to their homes. They decide to write each other letters over the school year. After the first day of school, Hela runs home to write letters to her friends. She starts to write a letter to Hiba, in Fusha, but feels that this is not a friendly letter. It feels more like homework. She thinks in Arbi, but cannot write what she means, and has to translate. Frustrated, she decides to write to Meriem first. She quickly realizes that her best bet is to write in French, but still struggles with finding the right words to say what she means. Finally, she settles on using Arbi words that she approximates phonetically and finishes one letter. For Hibas letter, though, It is harder for her to do this with Fusha, so she just writes a very short letter and writes some words in French. These solutions work, but leave her feeling unsatisfied. She feels closer to Meriem because she can communicate with her better. She rapidly loses interest in writing to Hiba, though.

Hela's cousin, Farah, grew up in Saudi Arabia. She is the same age as Hela and is in the fourth grade. Farah only speaks Saudi Arabic, Fusha, and English, which she studies at school. She feels that Fusha is strange and silly. Nobody really speaks it there either. When Farah and Hela get together, they can only speak a mixture of their dialect with Fusha. It is very strange for both of them. They hardly ever write each other letters, because they'd have to do it in Fusha, which neither feels comfortable with. Farah feels resentment towards Fusha and reads even less. She doesn't like music in Arabic as much as English or French music and only reads in Arabic if it is mandatory. Her French continues to improve and her Fusha remains poor. This does not bother her though, because she knows that once she gets to secondary school, Fusha would be much less important and if she wants to be a doctor when she grows up, she will only need French.

5.4.2 Vignette 2: Khaled and his friends

Khaled is a sixteen-year-old boy living in Tunis. He goes to a lycee known as "Les Pères blancs" because it used to be run by Christian White Fathers years ago. Now it is one of the better Tunisian secondary schools. Since he chose to specialize in Sciences, most of his subjects are taught in French: all the scientific subjects are taught in French. This has been the case since the first year of secondary school. Before then, all of his classes were taught in Fusha.

Khaled doesn't like Fusha and thinks he can do without it. With his friends, he speaks mostly Arbi, with a little French thrown in. Nobody speaks in Fusha, it sounds too weird and forced. The only classes he has in Fusha are liberal arts classes, like history, religion, and social studies. These classes bore him. The teachers are too traditional, and have no sense of humor. He is not interested in the topics because they are presented in such a dry, bland manner. He doesn't believe they even matter, because, since he is in the Sciences section, his grades in Math and Biology are a lot more important than his grades in the liberal arts classes. Even if he gets poor grades in some of the classes that are taught in Fusha, his grades in the scientific subjects easily compensate for the loss.

Khaled never reads in Arabic for pleasure although he does read in French. He only reads La Presse, the main Tunisian newspaper in French, even though his father buys him Arabic ones. He only watches 'Antenne 2,' a French Television station, because that's where the cool shows are. The only television shows in Arabic are Egyptian Soap operas, which are in Egyptian Arabic, or even Mexican ones, which are dubbed into Fusha. Both types he finds stupid and tedious. He watches a lot of movies, most of which are in French. He prefers American movies (dubbed into French) to French and European ones. Khaled watches MTV-Europe which is in English and only listens to the European "Top Twenty," which consists mostly of songs in English. His favorite groups are U2 and 'The Back Street Boys.' He likes to go to clubs that play European dance music. He does not know how to dance to Arab music very well. He only does that when he goes to a wedding.

Recently, he went to Saudi Arabia, to visit his cousin, Sourour. He soon realized that even there, Fusha is not really the most important language. Every one has to speak English to get by. Sourour, who is his age, grew up in Saudi Arabia and is now in secondary school there. Her school uses the British system. She still studies Fusha, but mostly does translation from Arabic to English, which she finds easier than if she had to do the opposite. Fusha is notused. Nobody ever speaks it there, except for the presenters on the news. She doesn't feel comfortable speaking it. Khaled and Sourour don't speak the same Arabic dialects.

Khaled understands most of what Sourour says when she speaks in Arabic, but she does not understand (Tunisian) Arbi. He has to use Fusha or French in order to speak to her. They finally settle on a mixture of the two, because her French is not as good as his. When he returns to Tunis, he wants to write her letters, so he writes them in Fusha but throws in words in French and English. He doesn't feel that Fusha should matter to Tunisians if it is not even important to Middle Easterners. Tunisians have their own Arabic which is more natural to them and French and English which are more practical in the world today.

6.0 Diglossia and the Arabic language

6.1 Conceptual and definitional considerations

J.V. Neustupny (1968) defines a 'language problem' as a situation which relates to conditions "...of which the speech community is not fully aware, which have not become a target of language policy, and which are still capable of contributing largely to the tension within the society." Neustupny's definition seems to apply quite well to the Arabic diglossia situation. For most Arabs, there is usually one 'Arabic language' to which they refer as *ʿarbi*, *ʿarabi*, or *ʿarabiyya*. It is within this Arabic language which is an ambiguous reality and a symbolic abstraction comprising the old and new language norms and standards of all the linguistic varieties of Arabic, that Arabic diglossia will be found and defined.

A lot has been written about 'diglossia'[5] ever since Ferguson's 1959 seminal article. Linguists, sociolinguists, and other language scholars used the term to describe numerous multilingual situations of varying complexity. Wardaugh (1986:88) applied it to the situation of Chaucer's English in England, which co-existed for three centuries in a diglossic situation with Norman French following the Norman conquest of 1066 and also for the use of Latin as the language of scholarship in a Europe where the vernaculars were relegated to other roles during the Middle Ages. Fishman (1992) extended the concept of diglossia to bilingual communities in which one finds a hierarchical evaluation of languages. This is not however, desirable because it seems to trivialize the issue of Arabic diglossia considerably. Nadia Anghelescu (1974) warns against such terminological mix which she says will lead to the use of the term for 'stylistic functional variation' and will disguise its unique psychological linguistic traits. Anghelescu (1974:83) thinks that "diglossia implies sufficiently similar languages for the speakers to feel that it is the same language, yet remote enough, so that the acquisition of the literary language implies long-term efforts and can never be fully achieved."

A brief review of the situation is needed for a clear definitional framework which will focus on the characteristic features of 'diglossia'

6.1.1 Diglossia, linguistic distance, and the *diglossic continuum*

Diglossia represents the separate adaptation of related speech communities to their different sociocultural environments. Dell Hymes (1973) has shown that the simple accumulation of unshared changes would in time suffice to make the languages of separate groups within a larger speech community mutually unintelligible. This phenomenon often leads to the emergence of separate linguistic codes (languages or dialects) across and within geographically and socially defined groups and communities. When it occurs, linguistic diversity presents strong links with the linguistic distance which emerges within a given community resulting from the temporal, spatial, and social separation which may exist between languages (or dialects) and the speakers who use them within their respective communities. Degrees of loss of mutual intelligibility lead to the reinforcement of diglossia which becomes an important element of communicative unity.

The concept of 'diglossic continuum'[8] relates to the notion that the size of the dividing gap which exists between two separate but linguistically, socially and culturally related language forms in a differentiated functional situation is going to vary according to the linguistic distance which separates the two varieties. The importance of the diglossic situation is going to be measured in terms of the degree of the overlap, or lack of it, of the mutual intelligibility which exists between the two opposed language varieties. Where the linguistic distance is important and shows very little or no mutual intelligibility, we may witness a significant linguistic discontinuity. Arabic diglossia seems to place itself in the middle of a *diglossic continuum* because all the varieties of Arabic which are included in this continuum are mutually understandable independently of the nature or degree of linguistic distance which separates them. Within this diglossic range, the H variety is the furthest away from all the others. This means that important accommodation strategies will be needed for the school discourse.
The concept of diglossic continuum[8] is useful and could be used to compare Arabic diglossia to other situations where the term may apply such as English or Chinese.

6.1.2 High (H) versus Low (L)

Ferguson's definition of *diglossia*[7] describes a situation which includes the following features: (a) a differentiation between the written and oral modes; (b) a socio-functional differentiation based on the complementarity of two separate sets of functions performed by two linguistic codes where high (H) is used by the superposed variety and

low (L) by the other varieties; (c) a rich and dominant (written) literary tradition which embodies some of the fundamental values of the community; and last but not least, (d) an element of linguistic relatedness represented in the degree of sameness which exists between the two competing linguistic codes . According to Ferguson (1972), *diglossia* comes into being when: (a) there is a sizable body of literature in a language closely related to (or even identical with) the indigenous language of a community and (b) when literacy in the community is limited to a small elite and a long period of time, of the order of several centuries, has followed the establishment of a literacy and its written literature.

The most important feature of diglossia is the establishment of rigid and complementary sets of exclusive functions where (H) occurs only in situations where it is not appropriate for (L) to occur. This rigid functional complementarity should give way only to slight and insignificant overlap. The (H) variety is used in formal schooling as the language of instruction and as content for literature, poetry and prose, civics, history, lectures in tertiary education, religious sermons, formal political speeches, newspaper articles and editorials, and news broadcasts. The (L) variety is used in conversation with friends and family at home, at the marketplace and most everywhere outside of the school environment. It is also used in folk literature, in radio and TV soap operas, plays, advertisements, and health messages. (L) is used in common political speeches and meetings and in court discussions and related activities.

Haugen (1972) observed that linguistic norms are based upon a taught, written standard. He understood that schooling facilitates the imposition of the written and formal (H) standard upon the L spoken varieties of language which can only be 'tolerated' if at all. The characteristic features of written language apply better to 'situations of formality' and are always used in the development of the standard language society seems to value. The permanence of writing gives the written language its status in the search for historical identity or the authority of a religious tradition. Finally, as the favored medium of literature and a source of standards of linguistic excellence, the written language becomes the central force behind prescriptive tradition and purism in language use.

As noted by various researchers, this dichotomy seems to be giving way to interesting changes in the functional uses of (H) and (L), where contexts which were previously thought to be the exclusive domain of the high variety now incorporate elements of the low variety or are even completely taken over by it. This can be looked at as quite an important development when it relates to the acquisition by (L) of a more important written status.

6.2 Linguistic nature of Arabic diglossia

6.2.1 Diglossia and standardization According to Hymes (1973:22), the dominant practical response to the existence of linguistic diversity has been '...to impose a novel unity in the form of the hegemony of one language or standard.' The standardization of Arabic, which began in the 8th and 9th centuries AD, produced a set of norms that the early Arab grammarians called *fusha*. This term will be used from hereon to refer to the (H) variety of Arabic. This term will refer to what most linguists and scholars refer to as Classical Arabic (=CA). These early language planning measures gave predominance to the written standard as the prestige language of the Quranic tradition and literary heritage, and equated it with written Arabic. They helped determine the rules of the Arabic language in a normative framework which has been used until now in the teaching of language proficiency. Over the course of many centuries, the continued use of this favored set of written linguistic norms led to substantial differences between the written and the spoken forms of Arabic (diglossia) and engendered the notion that the now codified written standard was the 'real language,' and that all other varieties of it were 'degenerate' and 'corrupt' versions.

6.2.2 Is *fusha* a mother tongue? While *all* children painlessly and inevitably learn their local vernacular or colloquial dialect of Arabic, only those who have access to the benefits of formal schooling may learn *fusha*, thereby acquiring socioeconomic gains as well as social mobility. Since the acquisition of *fusha* is connected to socioeconomic advancement, the persistence of that variety of Arabic is a significant cause of social inequality. *Fusha* becomes a gatekeeping mechanism to limit upward mobility to those who have acquired it when that mobility is not already based on a 'foreign' Language of Wider Communication (=LWC). It is clear from this description that *fusha* cannot easily be considered a mothertongue. *Fusha* is nobody's mother tongue and is rarely or almost never used at home in the Arab world. It is only learned through schooling and used exclusively at outside official or formal functions. The native dialect or vernacular variety of Arabic is typically acquired as a mother tongue and continues to be used almost exclusively in speech throughout adulthood and life.

A controversy exists over the issue of whether *fusha* could or could not replace the 'mother tongue' in the context of Arabic language school acquisition. Dan Wagner (1993:172-3) remarks that Standard Arabic (= *fusha*) differs in a number of ways from dialectal Moroccan Arabic, but adds that "...in spite of such differences, Moroccan Arabic speakers can be thought of as learning literacy in their mother tongue in the same sense that nonstandard dialectal English speakers (e.g., African-Americans in the United States; Scottish-English speakers in Great Britain) are learning mother tongue literacy when they learn to read English." Wagner's position in regard to equating *fusha* with a 'mothertongue

language' is only backed by the 'confused identification' generally obvious in the current behavior of Arabs who when asked to indicate what their 'mothertongue' or 'native' language is, automatically indicate 'Arabic' and never Moroccan or Jordanian Arabic as should have been the case. The strong cultural disposition of Arabs to consider *fusha* a 'mother tongue' shows the important weight of tradition. However, there seems to be a negative effect to this attitudinal blindness in favor of *fusha*. It is represented in the experience of the Arab children when they first face linguistic discontinuity in the formal school setting. We still look forward to an early child psychology study of the problems caused by diglossia in school or pre-school. Only such a study can fully confirm any claims that fall outside of the accepted definitional norms of linguistics.

6.2.3 The psychological reality of *fusha* Parkinson (1991:39) believes that *fusha* has a concrete reality and "is an important part of the communicative lives of all educated Egyptians." Parkinson adds that " [*fusha*] may not have native speakers, but it certainly has native users, people who read it fluently and listen to it with ease and understanding every day, and who occasionally use it in speaking and writing as well." Parkinson relates the story a friend who was a passionate supporter of *fusha* and who decided to stick to it exclusively in his family in order to give his children the full advantage of having it as a native language. Getting on a busy Cairo bus with this friend and his three-year-old daughter, the two of them, father and daughter, were separated and the yelling that was necessary to reestablish the contact took place in *fusha* making the entire bus burst out in laughter. This anecdotal narrative account illustrates the fact that *fusha*'s role is limited to formalities and does not relate normal streets' events.

6.2.4 Linguistic description of Arabic diglossia Generally speaking, the linguistic relationship which exists between the written standard and spoken Arabic dialects is "impressionistic at best" in A.Kaye's (1972) terms, "flexible and changeable." The diglossic situation in the Arabic countries is going to differ from country to country in terms of the relative linguistic distance which exists between *fusha* and the linguistic features of the specific Arabic dialect with which it is in contact. This situation is also dynamic and changing because of the dynamic nature of the dialects themselves. It is changing at two levels: first, at the level of any given Arabic colloquial, and secondly, at the level of the whole range of Arabic dialects. The *fusha* and the sum of all the colloquials in use in the Arab region represent the 'Arabic continuum' known under the ambiguous term commonly referred to as 'The Arabic Language.'

A comparison of *fusha* with any of the existing Arabic dialects will show a situation which exhibits phonological, syntactical, and lexical differences.[8] The situation can briefly be described in the following points:

(1) *Fusha* is a highly inflectional language with case endings for number, gender and tense. The colloquials lost all inflections and case endings.
(2) *Fusha* follows a VSO (Verb-Subject-Object) word order while the dialects follow a SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) structure based on strict word order.
(3) All *fusha* grammatical functions are marked by an inflectional system of vocalic representation consisting of short vowels (*'iʿraab*). Most of the functional vocalic representation has been lost in most of the colloquial Arabic forms.
(4) There are morphological distinctions of number (singular, dual, and plural) and gender (masculine and feminine). The dual forms have totally disappeared from all dialects. Various other forms have also disappeared but not systematically from all dialects. The feminine plural for instance does not exist in Tunisian Arabic but seems to persist in some other dialects.
(5) *Fusha* adjectives agree with nouns in number and gender.
(6) The phonological structure of *fusha* is composed of 28 consonants, three short and three long vowels. Most dialects have a more complex vocalic structure which has two additional vowels (/e / and /o/).
(7) Fusha has a rich lexicon based on an almost unlimited use of derivation. The dialects also have a rich lexicon and benefit from a freer attitude towards borrowing from foreign sources.

6.2.5 Definitional problem of Modern *fusha* standards There is a great confusion and numerous disagreements about the definition and delimitation of the modern linguistic standards and norms of grammatical acceptability of *fusha* common among most Arabs. This situation concerns the definition of the current norms of linguistic correctness in the larger Arabic-speaking speech community. Views vary a great deal about what constitutes 'Modern *fusha*' and a hot and controversial debate seems to accompany this issue whenever it is raised in the Arab region.

Three positions clearly emerge from this confusion around the term *fusha* and constitute possible parameters for an analysis and understanding of the levels of evaluation and the constituents of the language fluency used in Arabic reading and instruction. They are the following:

(1) Many Arabs seem to restrict the use of *fusha* to the Arabic of the Islamic tradition and literature of the Classical period.
(2) Others, who follow the Classicists' position, use it for a language that mimics CA or a classical form of *fusha* and strictly follows the rigorous grammatical rules fixed by the early Arab grammarians.
(3) Still a third position is represented by those Arabs who believe that contrary to the conservative opinion of many traditionalists, *fusha* manifests itself in the Arabic language of today's written and spoken,

formal use. This last group believes that a *Modern fusha* exists in the variety of Arabic currently used in modern literary works and also in newspapers and other channels of written and oral media, official documents, and the system of education. In order to better identify their *fusha* and differentiate it from the previous definitions, the proponents of this position (who could be called Modernists) introduced labels which have been exclusively used in specialized linguistic writings to qualify the appropriate level of linguistic analysis and use for a better limitation of appropriate standards of reading and writing fluency. The term *Modern fusha*[9] seems to be a more appropriate term in the context of the present study. Other terms used by the author and numerous other linguists such as Modern Standard Arabic (=MSA), and Modern Literary Arabic, are equivalent terms but will not have a full terminological weight for a non-specialized Arabic.

Labels such as *fasiih, lugha muᶜaasira, lughat 'al-ᶜasr,* or *lughat 'al-jaraa'id* have been frequently tagged to the term *fusha* to indicate a level of product quality. Parkinson (1991) mentions that the scholars of Daar 'al ᶜuluum and the Arabic language teachers college of the University of Cairo, recognize this terminological problem and have begun using *fusha* for the classical heritage language and *fasiih* for what most Western Arabic specialists call Modern Standard Arabic (=MSA).

6.2.6 *Modern fusha* and newspaper Arabic To many observers, Arabs are less and less able to read, understand, write, and speak in this formal variety called *Modern fusha*. The prevailing Arab attitude about this variety of Arabic seems to indicate general and constant complaints about the level of correctness of *fusha* at the level of the innovative forms that professionals and individual users introduce almost on a daily base in that language. Newspaper writers according to some observers, bear an important share of the responsibility of spreading faulty and incorrect language in spite of the efforts made by the editors and well-trained correctors to maintain a minimum standard of acceptable language production. A more serious criticism is addressed to newspaper Arabic and that is the free and deliberate use of colloquial forms whenever there is an urgent need that arises (and even sometimes, for the sake of communicative realism).

Talking about the grammatical rules of *Modern fusha,* Parkinson (1981: 26) remarks that "[for] many Arabs, and for some Arabists, the term *fusha* is used to mean the classical language described prescriptively by the medieval grammarians. Since the modern written language used in newspapers, literature, etc. still basically follows those rules, it also is considered *fusha*. But since they are using the term prescriptively, it would be impossible for their *fusha* to undergo a syntactic change. For them, VSO <u>is</u> the basic word order no matter what people <u>do</u>, since that is what the grammarians say it is." Both Arab scholars and users, are going to place *fusha* (and *Modern fusha)* in a rigidly normative mold

with a prescriptive set of rules to which everybody should strictly conform.

6.2.7 ***Modern fusha* and pedagogical implications** A certain sense of inertia emanates from official documents and pedagogical directives related to the teaching of the Arabic language in formal schooling or non-formal education. All documents refer to *al-ʿarabiyya*, the 'official' Arabic language. Though this latter term has enough sufficiency, it does not seem to be clearly understood when implementation in the educational classroom context calls for simplification reforms aiming at grammatical structure or lexicon. Most Arab educators seem to keep a reserved, often silent, attitude in regard to which *Modern fusha* rules teachers should accept in the Arab classrooms. Since an unmitigated use of *fusha* is almost impossible, Arabs agree to the acceptance of a relatively low level of tolerance in schooling and literacy classes in spite of strict restrictions which apply to the use of colloquial forms in *Modern fusha*.

The above situation shows that there is a great deal of confusion in the implementation and transferability of pedagogical directions across school systems and country education structures for clear standards of evaluation of Arabic reading and writing and the comparability of their results. Because the 'diglossic situation' of every Arab country is specific, *fusha* is not going to obey to the same evaluation standards. There are as many *fushas* as there are Arab countries, and these *fusha*s are not easy to categorize or describe. The "slipperiness" of *Modern fusha* (Parkinson, 1991: 35) and the Arab users' approximate knowledge of it add to the complexity of reform attempts and to the challenge of finding concrete pedagogical solutions for better *fusha* acquisition and sustainability. The elaboration of a common core of pan-Arab standards might however, be possible. Here again, important research would be in great need.

6.3 Sociolinguistic profile of Arabic diglossia

Even tough the problem of Arabic diglossia seems to have attracted the attention of Western scholars first, many Arab linguists have given it attention in the last 30 to 40 years. Garmadi (1966); Maamouri (1973), Altoma (1974), El-Hassan (1977), Zughoul (1980), and El-Gibali (1993), to mention just a few, have given accounts of diglossia and the 'diglossic continuum' in the Arabic-speaking region. Most descriptions show the existence of a typical 'linguistic continuum' in most Arab countries based on a diglossic situation which includes: (a) Classical Arabic, (b) several *fushas* and (c) several local varieties of a dominant regional dialect (see Maamouri (1973) for the Maghreb region and Badawi (1993) for the Machrek region). To this central Arabic diglossia core can be added a bilingual situation of varying intensity in which the whole Arabic continuum finds itself in a dynamic conflictual differentiation with a 'foreign' language, mainly French in the Maghreb and sometimes

English in the Machrek. This section presents some of the prominent attitudes and features of the sociolinguistic situation of the Arabic language with special regards given to the Arab educational setting.

6.3.1 What is "official" Arabic? Almost all Arab constitutions indicate that *'al-ʿarabiyya* is the 'official' language in each Arab country. This use of the term is highly ambiguous and reflects the existence of a certain 'cultural blindness' which seems to be imposed by the weight of the Arabic-Islamic heritage. The emergence today, of a *ʿarabiyya* as a culturally defined set of linguistic resources including the sum of old and new linguistic varieties in use in each given Arab country, shows that there are going to be as many varieties of official 'Arabics' in the region and therefore, as many *'fushas'* or *fusha* standards as there are Arab countries. The vagueness of the language officialization and the unclear definition of the legal status of the term used may not prove to be detrimental after all. It may lead to the individual choice of each Arab country to adapt its language officialization and its status planning policy and measures to the specific requirements of its own diglossia situation.

6.3.2 Cultural and political perception of colloquial Arabic The cultural perception of "Arabic" in the Arab region plays a dominant role in the linguistic behavior of Arabs who seem to easily gloss out variation and diversity for the ideology of validating and preserving the cultural and historical uniqueness of their prestige variety. *Fusha* truly represents for them what Gallagher (1968:129) calls "an intellectual attic filled with ancestral treasures." The common ideologically acceptable and politically correct attitude with regards to the place of the colloquials in Arabic diglossia is total non-acceptance of colloquial Arabic forms in most formal situations. The use of colloquial Arabic becomes suspicious and may show an unacceptable lack of linguistic loyalty equal to treason to 'Arab Nation' feelings. This 'zero-tolerance' and high sensitivity of Arabs to 'linguistic diversity' seen as a symbolic reflection of 'political disunity' has been and still is a marking position in pan-Arab politics. It has turned any consideration given to Arabic dialects and to the problem of 'dialectal variation' by Arabs into a serious political taboo. It is for this reason that the place of 'official' debating of language-related issues in Arab politics seems to be insignificant and almost non-existent. It is also for the same reason that consideration of any serious research on the diglossia issue has not been given full consideration in the Arabic departments of most Arab universities.

6.3.3 Arab attitudes towards Arabic Most Arabs value *fusha* and highly respect it because of its 'sacred nature.'[11] The superiority that Arabs bestow on their heritage language leads to a quasi-general denial of the existence of a home language, in this case colloquial Arabic. Arabs consider in fact that what is spoken at home, and elsewhere in common daily activities, is merely incorrect language which is only acceptable because it deals with lowly functions and topics. There is a prevailing

feeling among Arabs that their language is imbued with a natural superiority. This 'prestige valuation' of *fusha* is explained by Arabs as relating to such qualities as beauty, logic, and a high degree of expressiveness. *Fusha* carries in its own etymology the myth about its eloquence and high degree of correctness. Moreover, Arabs despise the spoken colloquial forms and even deny that they use them because they consider the colloquials they speak as 'degraded' and corrupt forms of the language. They give them derogatory names such as *barbri* "barbarian" or *yitkallam bi-l-fallaaqi* "he speaks the language of woodloggers."

6.3.4 Diglossia and normative filters: from (L) to (H) A frequent social and cultural practice which exists in the Arab region shows the existence of a normative linguistic filter which transposes all colloquial speech forms into equivalent forms in the formal standard. This filtered transposition of orality happens unconsciously whenever one is asked to write down any colloquial form. It shows that Arabs associate writing with a higher level of formality which is only supposed to be possible in *fusha*. This situation is not particular to Arabic and seems to indicate that people in general feel that the oral language has a lower level of cultural content. Researchers[12] have shown that there seems to be a strong correlation between the consciousness of a low cultural level and expectation of a higher level for written language among illiterate adults when they want a literacy mediator to help them with the writing of their messages. The use of a great amount of polite formulas and rhetorical figures in writing at the expense of a close-to-life language which could be more efficiently used, adds to the reputation that *fusha* has of being hermetic and unnecessarily difficult.

6.3.5 Diglossia and communicative transposition patterns: from (H) to (L) Arabs , even highly educated ones, find it difficult and unnatural to use *fusha* spontaneously without referring to a prepared text which is then partially or entirely read. Thus, religious sermons for instance, are either read or recited in a mixture of Classical Arabic and *Modern fusha*. However, we can observe that the oral intervention of colloquial Arabic is becoming more and more frequent in these situations for purposes of better communication. The growing incursion of the colloquials in the domains of religion and politics can be illustrated by the following: (a) S.A. El-Hassan (1977) describes an intralingual code-switching situation (switching from one language variant to another within the Arabic diglossic continuum) which took place in an Upper Egypt mosque. El-Hassan recorded and analyzed the mixed discourse of a 'Sheikh' (Moslem religious leader) who, while reading his sermon to an adult audience, interspersed his 'read' *fusha* with oral colloquial speech forms in which he paraphrased all the linguistically difficult segments of the message in order to make them 'linguistically closer' and easier to understand by all the less literate members of his audience; (b) In Tunisia, (and maybe, in some other Arab countries also) there is a daily presentation of the news in Tunisian Arabic on the national radio

programs. This transposition of the news in *fusha* is addressed to all Tunisian listeners, educated and illiterate. The decision to have such a program could have been originally prompted by the spread of illiteracy and by related gender considerations.

The transposition of news in *fusha* to a colloquial oral format occurs in situations when documents or books are read to very young (less than 6 year of age) children or illiterate adults. Reading in *fusha* to those two specific social groups leads to consecutive *fusha* readings segments with segments in colloquial 'translating' and 'paraphrasing' the content or storyline of the former ones.

6.3.6 *Modern fusha* and colloquial Arabic influence In spite of the hesitancy shown by Arabs with regards to borrowing directly from the language of their daily life, some authors bypass sometimes the cultural barriers and dare to introduce colloquial elements, and even foreign borrowings, into their prose. The usual attitude is that of complete rejection. To illustrate this, one can mention the passionate debate which surrounded the use by Abdelmajid Attia in an Arabic primer, in the late sixties in Tunisia, of the Tunisian Arabic (=TA) word *burwiita*, a direct borrowing from French brouette (for English "wheelbarrow). A more linguistically correct attitude could be observed at about the same period to illustrate the opposite attitude. It concerns the use of the 'revived' old archaic CA term *kujja* which was introduced in the vocabulary of some early grade primers in the Maghreb instead of an 'available' and frequently used TA word *biisa*, from French bille (for English "marble") with its irregular Arabic noun plural form *biis*. In spite of its *fusha* origins, *kujja* has not yet really entered the spontaneous world of children's games and play.

Because the language of instruction finds itself disconnected from the reality of expressive functions and has a reduced relevance to learner motivation, the learners' felt need for the use of colloquial forms orally and in writing is on the increase. Teachers and Arab educators seem firmly intent on trying to keep a zero to very low tolerance of colloquial use in the formal school discourse. This policy does not seem to be compatible with recent innovative trends witnessed in the use of colloquial in modern forms of Arabic literary prose.[10]

6.3.7 Diglossia and Arab teachers' *fusha* fluency There is an important folk confusion about *fusha* and degrees of *fusha* fluency. A negative evaluation of *fusha* fluency seems to exist even among educated users, in most Arab countries. Parkinson (1991:37) recalls the tradition that Arab scholars have of "faulting authors on their use of grammar, vocabulary, and Arabic style." He also narrates how Egyptian professors of Arabic find fault with Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz because "...he makes too many grammatical errors."

Faulting Arabic teachers is another commonplace which expresses the unhappiness of the Arab public with the low performance of the Arabic teachers and its negative effect on the acquisition of *Modern fusha* fluency in schools. Taha Hussein (1954), a well-known Egyptian writer, considers that the teachers of *fusha* do not know the language well enough to the extent that they can efficiently communicate the subject matter to their students.[13] W. Philistin (1958) adds the view that the problem is essentially pedagogical and shows the teachers' inability to use and teach *fusha*. These two remarks are corroborated with plenty of informal data collected over the years from this author's visits to primary and secondary schools in Tunisia where the same remarks could easily apply. The training of competent *Modern fusha* teachers needs greater consideration by Arab educational authorities in most Arab countries. It would have to be fully integrated into any serious reform recommendation aiming at improving the level of reading standards in the Arab system of education. This measure is important pedagogically and psychologically because when Arab teachers show an acceptably high fluency in the language of instruction, their example will encourage the students to learn from them. It may also stop the Arab schoolchildren and illiterate Arab adults from fostering the belief that Arabic is difficult and cannot be learned.

6.3.8 Diglossia in the Arab classroom The mix of Arabic language patterns in the classroom leads to serious pedagogical problems and even to feelings of linguistic insecurity in formal school communication among high numbers of young Arab learners. This lack of security comes from a general feeling of low understanding of *Modern fusha* and of low identification with its norms. It also comes from the failure of the language of Arab education to provide: (a) emotionally, the feeling of symbolic meaningfulness and relevance to the child's needs; (b) sociologically, the means to identify and bond with the other members of the school community and of the community at large; and last but not least, (c) pedagogically, the provision of an easy, joyful, and relevant instruction process

Young Arab users do not feel that they are free to use and innovate in *fusha*. Pupils entering school have to 'unlearn' or even suppress most of their linguistic habits while they try to acquire a new set of 'rigid' rules. The burden of internalizing these new habits is not helped or reinforced by classroom practices focused on the exclusive use of the 'official' language of instruction. A clash seems to occur in Arab classrooms between two conflictual practices. On the one hand, teachers deliberately try to neglect and undermine the actual speech habits of the pupils. On the other, the same teachers find themselves often obliged to use the colloquial to communicate with their learners for one reason or another. Teachers and students seem to show a frequent preference for a significant use of the colloquial in conversations in and outside of the classroom. Teachers of subject matters other than Arabic use colloquial

Arabic more frequently it seems, to communicate difficult content points. It is not possible to determine the bulk or describe the characteristic features of this important intra-Arabic classroom interaction. This commonly observed feature of the teaching patterns of Arab schooling across levels of education and across regions needs further description.

The intermingling of *fushas* and colloquials in the Arab region and the lack of clear-cut linguistic marking barriers [14] aggravate the insecurity of the young learners who seem confused by what constitutes *fusha* in the Arabic forms which surround them and what does not. From the informal remarks of some Egyptian primary school teachers, it seems that learners in the Machrek find it difficult to stop the insidious incursion of the colloquial forms in their written production. Because of their incomplete knowledge of *fusha*, these learners borrow colloquial forms to fill in lexical or grammatical gaps. They seem to often do this as these forms are readily available and make more sense to them. The situation is more complex in the Maghreb where the same needs lead to the incursion of local colloquial forms, French-based borrowings, but also interdialectal borrowings coming from the Arabic colloquials which are brought into their learning environment by an important movie presence from Egypt and Syria. This situation is described in the research done in Tunisian primary schools by Mohamed Jabeur in the mid-eighties, which reveals that a growing number of Egyptian or Syrian words and linguistic forms are being used in the written composition of young schoolchildren because they are under the impression that those forms really belong to *fusha*.[15]

6.3.9 Diglossia outside of the Arab classroom The question of exposure of Arab schoolchildren to *fusha* has serious implications for the acquisition and consequent school success. The question of when and in what specific situations Arab children encounter *Modern fusha* merits the greater attention of researchers and education experts.

Trying to address this question, one finds that Arab children are rarely in contact with *fusha* in normal discourse situations with parents or friends, or other people anywhere in the real-life activities of their home and play environment. In play situations, children may use oral *fusha* but additional features of artificiality and lack of spontaneity appear in those 'special' discourse events. However, Arab children hear *fusha* on the radio and in a very limited TV broadcasting that is targeted to them. *Iftah ya Simsim* and *Al Manaahil* (two 'Arabized' versions of The Children Television Workshop (CTW)'s educational television programs *Sesame Street* and *Electric Company*) were specifically aimed at supplementing the insufficient preparation of the Arab children to schooling by trying to provide an early exposure to *Modern fusha*.[16] More recently, it appears that numerous TV programs are being daily viewed by Arab children everywhere in the region. Unfortunately

however, these products mostly represent quick translations of commercial international programs with poor and unequal *fusha* quality and no adaptation whatsoever to the region's educational and cultural goals.

In the exposure of the Arab child to oral *Modern fusha* production, which is limited to no more than a few hour per week, one can detect an element of unnaturalness and inappropriateness coming from the highly improbable use of these language forms by children who are not supposed to have already acquired them and could not therefore sound anything but 'funny' and 'strange.'

In his analysis of the nature and implications of the use of *Modern fusha* in The Children Television Workshop's *Iftah Ya Simsim (=IYS)*, Abu-Absi (1984, 1986, 1990, 1991) deals with this important question and makes the claim that the 'simplified Arabic' of IYS manages to bring forth "novel and unexpected spontaneity and naturalness" in the interactive discourse of children and adult characters. Little or no research has been done so far to substantiate such an important claim. The program seems to have had a relatively short shelf life in some Arab countries where it seems to have been forgotten without intentions or perspectives of follow-up anywhere in the region.[17]

7.0 Diglossia and 'Education-in-Arabic'

In a foreword to Palmer's *Towards a Literate World*, Muhammad Hassan Ibrahim (1993) writes: "Complaints about poor standards of instruction and low levels of achievement are frequent and familiar topics throughout the entire Arab region. Underachievement, sometimes amounting to non-achievement, in writing and reading is often underscored by parents and educators alike. The question of becoming truly literate in Arabic is an issue that often extends beyond the first few years of school and, indeed, all the way through college."

In view of the present study's focus on the acquisition of Arabic language competence in the Arab system of education, the present section will focus on two main problems, namely (a) the Arabic reading process, and (b) its relationship to the Arabic writing system. A brief review will be presented of the relevant theoretical framework in which this Arabic reading overview could be best placed. The characteristic features of both problems will then be outlined, highlighting the most urgent areas for research orientation and action.

7.1 Framework of reading acquisition

Reviewing the latest literature on reading acquisition in a forthcoming article, Sabatini[18] states that progress has been made in terms of the allied

perspectives of the developmental and educational psychology approach and the cognitive approach more centered on skilled adult readers. In his description of the existing models of children's reading acquisition, Sabatini indicates that a significant breakthrough came with work done by Liberman, Shankweiler, and Liberman (1987), which was premised on the question: "Since children are quite fluent in their native language when first encountering the language in print...what is required of the child in reading a language but not in speaking or listening to it?" What Liberman et al. proposed was that "the learner must master the alphabetic principle which entails an awareness of the phonological structure of the words of the language that is more explicit than is ever demanded in listening or responding to speech."[19] Sabatini indicates that available evidence confirms that "phonological processing deficits are causal of severe reading disability in English, as well as a contributing factor in the low ability of most slow or poor readers." Citing research on reading difficulties in Sweden, Sabatini adds that "[e]vidence from other countries with alphabetic systems confirms the important role of sight to sound correspondences in acquiring fluent word recognition skills."[20] The relationship of phonemic awareness to children's reading acquisition is obvious in Frith's three-step strategy mode: (a) acquisition of *logographic skills* (instant recognition of familiar words based on salient visual features, (b) acquisition of the *alphabetic skills* (knowledge and use of individual phonemes and graphemes and the systematic application of letter by letter decoding skills, and (c) acquisition of the *orthographic skills* (instant analysis of words into orthographic units or morphemes without phonological conversion.

Sabatini stresses the following points: (1) the initial attainment of the alphabetic skills is dependent on some prerequisite level of phonemic awareness and higher levels of phonemic segmentation skills based on the knowledge of visual letters and practice in analyzing words into grapheme-phoneme units, (2) the orthographic step begins to emerge by third grade though the endpoint of development is vague, and finally (3) the phonological processes and the development of an early awareness of the structure of words in the language are critical to the acquisition of the of decoding skills.

Sabatini completes this theoretical framework by focusing on what can be learned from the reading models which apply to the skilled reader. He uses Perfetti's 'simple view' of reading acquisition which makes the following two claims: (1) reading consists of word recognition and language comprehension, and (2) each of these components is necessary for reading.

Perfetti (1986) believes that it is correct to apply the decoding definition of reading (the skill of transforming printed words into spoken words) especially to beginning reading. He also states that in children's reading, the ability to understand beyond the beginning stages of learning to read,

"...is skill at comprehending text which could uncover very general language and cognitive abilities and strategies." Perfetti concludes that to the extent that reading is a linguistic activity, it is limited by linguistic ability. Because low-reading ability is related to processes of symbol activation and language ability, Perfetti concludes that "[t]hese processes set the limit on lexical processes that are at the heart of reading ability....The efficiency of lexical process is important for comprehension."[21]

The above brief theoretical overview seems to stress the important role played by an ordered set of three interrelated skills in reading activity. These abilities are: (1) importance of decoding skills, (2) importance of word recognition, and (3) importance of language comprehension for advanced stages of reading. This theoretical framework seems to be most useful when looking at the various aspects of reading (and writing) in Arabic. It will help us to better understand the complexities and pitfalls of the Arabic reading acquisition process and it will serve as a base for appropriate research suggestions and recommendations.

7.2 Arabic reading

A first look at the Arabic reading context indicates that Arab learners do not seem to follow the easy transition from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' that most children experience all over the world. Arab children it seems, need to understand in order to read. The need for language comprehension as a pre-requisite to the acquisition of the decoding skills is an aberration which has been noted by various scholars and education specialists. This situation led Father Anastase al-Karmali, one of the members of the Arabic Language Academy in Egypt, to say that "The Arab studies the rules of the Arabic language in order to learn to read, whereas others read in order to learn the sciences; that is the difference between them and us."[22]

7.2.1 Why can't Muhammad read?

As soon as he arrived for the first day of school, Muhammad had to learn that 'uqʿud for English "Sit down" was 'ijlis; that his word for English "Fish," huut meant "a whale" when written and read, and that it needed to be replaced by a new word samak when writing and reading. He knew this word because he heard it in Iftah Ya Simsim and in Al-Manaahil, two TV programs he liked to watch on his Arabic TV channel. With more time spent in school, Muhammad did not know anymore whether the written word for "milk" is haliib or laban which was his Tunisian Arabic word for "buttermilk." He saw written forms used for both of them: haliib on a Tunisian milk bottle and laban on a milk product advertised in a Lebanese magazine.

As soon as he learned his letters, Muhammad started to read the world surrounding him. This changed his whole appreciation of life and of the concrete things around him. He discovered to his great confusion, that the electricity bill his family received at the end of every month, used a new word in Arabic, kahraba, which meant "car" in his own speech. How could that be? When asked, his teacher explained that the new word for "car" is going to be sayyaara which reminded him of tayyaara, his own word for "airplane." However, if the latter comes understandably from taar "to fly," what is the meaning of saar? Certainly not "to go," in his mother tongue.

What Muhammad clearly understood after the first months, is that he could not anymore rely on words to mean what they meant in his own home and with his family and friends. He understood also that changing spoken words into written words often made them lose their familiarity. Reading in school brought him more surprises by the day. He knew both jawaab and risaala but what a difference between his jawaab (which he pronounced jwaab as he learned to write it) for "letter" and the school's risaala "letter" and jawaab "answer."

Muhammad was a good student and he knew that he had accept the flood of new words which was challenging him daily. He had to 'unlearn' a lot of what he already knew in order to do well in his Arabic reading class. If the language of the school was his "mother tongue," Muhammad thought, why was it then that the language of reading was so unfamiliar to him?

Muhammad discovered a few years later that because he was growing up and moving to higher grades, the vowels started to disappear. Reading in Arabic became more and more difficult as he had to memorize and remember the rules of Arabic morphology and grammar in order to read 'correctly.' He came to the realization one day that reading correctly in Arabic meant inserting the appropriate vowels in the words and that it was his responsibility. A question came to his mind: Why wasn't it the writer's responsibility to worry about providing the grammar along with the ideas. His French friends Jeanette and Didier had a much easier language, he thought, where they could read and understand without having to worry about grammatical rules. Muhammad thought that the French children were, after all, quite lucky to have their grammatical rules always present and ready to guide their first reading steps.

Muhammad soon also learned that Arabic texts did not sound the same when read by different Arabs from different Arab countries. Every country had its own flavor or 'accent' and used it to signal its own identity. Tunisians had their qaaf /q/, Egyptians their /'/. Syrians and Egyptians read th (as in English three) as / t / like the Moroccans or / s /. Even Gog and Magog from the Quran were read differently: hajuuja wa

majuuja in Tunis and Tripoli, hadjuuja wa madjuuja in Algiers, and haguuga and maguuga in Cairo. How could this be?

"Is there a preferred Arabic reading pronunciation? Who speaks the best fusha?" Didier asked his friend Muhammad because he wanted to know where he could learn the best Arabic. Muhammad did not know what to say. Every Arab thinks that his or her Arabic is the 'purest' and the best of all fushas.

Didier finally decided to go to where he could "learn to read Arabic without pain." So far, no Arab could assure him that such a place existed, not even for Arabs themselves.

The above vignette illustrates the various challenges faced by Muhammad, a Tunisian school pupil who speaks Tunisian Arabic (=TA), in learning to read *fusha*. Muhammad represents a typical Arab child learning Modern *fusha* (=MF), and he faces the same complex and demanding challenges faced by all other Arab children. These challenges are represented in the following features:

(a) important lexical differences even in commonplace everyday words and functional terms. Keeping in mind that reading consists of word recognition and language comprehension and that both of them are necessary, the above vignette illustrates the fact that the linguistic relatedness which exists between *Modern fusha* and the colloquial is not necessarily a positive contribution to successful reading. In many cases it will certainly be an obstacle to easy and fluid understanding. In spite of the familiar etymological structures of most *fusha* words, they are not necessarily easily understood because they show varying degrees of semantic differentiation.

Recognizing the differences in the written *fusha* Arabic vocabulary is an important hurdle in a child's abrupt transition from their spoken Arabic to *fusha*. Learning to read primers should be designed carefully not to overburden children with items too numerous and too varied to assimilate. Unfortunately this not the case. Often times, the new *fusha* words introduced in many primers are difficult to make use of and irrelevant to the Arab children's development. An early study was conducted by F. Akil (1953) on the basic vocabulary of Arabic primary reading in the Machrek. Akil studied fifteen primers used in five Arab countries and observed that there was no control and no basis for the choice of the vocabulary presented to the Arab child in the early primers. The same finding applies to the Maghreb primers which were studied in the seventies and which were found to share the same weakness.

(b) inflections denoting gender, number and tense, most of which have disappeared from all the colloquial Arabic dialects. Because it uses inflectional endings, *Modern fusha* does not lend itself easily to a linear

reading process. An added difficulty in the Arabic reading process comes from the loss in the colloquials of distinctions for dual and gender. The Arab child comes to Arabic reading with no preaparation and no clues on such grammatical categories as feminine/dual or plural/feminine.

Additionally, a common mistake among even advanced Modern *fusha* readers is found in the conjugation of the verbal stem vowel, which is the vowel which occurs between the second and third consonants of the stem. This vowel is going to vary depending on whether the verb is in the perfective (*maadhi*) or the imperfect (*mudhaara'*) tense forms. Since the latter use is irregular it needs to be learned by rote memorization and it is therefore, a regular source of reading mistakes for both learners and teachers. Reading in Modern *fusha* often suffers from inadequate and ineffective teaching of Modern *fusha* grammar which does not have any correlation to the spoken Arabic.

(c) important varying changes in phonological structure with sounds in writing which have dropped out of everyday usage. This relates to discrepancies which occur in situations where some letters of the Arabic alphabet are read differently in *Modern fusha* than they are in the various colloquials.

(d) lack of a unified *fusha* Arabic scientific vocabulary at various levels of the curriculum. Despite the disparate work and efforts by academies in Cairo, Damascus, Amman, Rabat, and others, and by individual users of the written language, such as the teachers, writers, scientists, and journalists, in the various countries of the Arab region, *fusha* is not unified to the point where scientific content can be exchanged in Arabic with the certainty of exact comprehension. The occurrence of multiple words for the same concept often creates a real communication gap, which adds to the general feeling of semantic and terminological anarchy. For Arabic schoolchildren, especially high school students and more advanced readers, this impedes advanced reading progress and higher levels of scientific attainment in and outside formal schooling.

7.3 Exposure of Arab children to *fusha* reading In spite of the high value placed on reading and learning in the Quran, reading does not seem to be a widely spread habit in the region. In addition to the difficulties outlined above, some extra-linguistic factors seem to have had an unfavorable influence on the reading performance of young Arab children. To mention a few: (a) lack of exciting and attractive in-school and out-of-school reading materials with colorful pictures and relevant up-to-date topics, (b) lack of attractive schools and trained school teachers, and (c) lack of a strong popular 'reading-at-home' tradition.

7.3.1 The paucity of children books Picture and story books and magazines in *fusha* for children exist, but in comparatively lesser

numbers than in other developed countries. Ben Cheikh (1982) observes that reading is not strongly rooted in the Arab-Muslim family structure and habits. He underlines in his report to UNESCO: (a) the inadequate development of publishing in the Arab region; (b) the extremely low number of school libraries; and (c) the inefficient and deficient library system. Ben Cheikh makes the remark that: "Insufficient both in quantity and quality, schools (and public) libraries fulfill only to a very limited extent their role as cultural centers for pupils." Talking about the inadequate development of publishing and book editing in the Arab countries, Ben Cheikh points out that "the number of titles published per million of population is far smaller than that of most other continents or regions of the world, with the exception of Africa." The problem of limited and inadequate textbook production in the MENA region was also mentioned by S. Heyneman (1997) and included in his study as an important cause of poor quality schools.

7.3.2 The reading habit and conditions of schooling environment Massalias and Jarrar (1983) show the counterproductive effects of prevailing social and economic conditions influencing educational practice in the region. These conditions limit the expectations and aspirations of parents for their children. Deficiencies in schools such as few or no libraries and scarce or non-existent textbooks exacerbate problems. Textbooks, according to the authors, are not motivating because "the quality of paper, the type of print, the pictorial presentation, the page format, and the implied instructional methodology make the text highly unattractive to students." In recent years, remarkable advances have been made in developing and promoting children books in Arabic in most countries in the Arab region. However, most Arab countries still receive more books, magazines, storybooks, picture books, and cartoon-type picture books in English and French, which compete economically and culturally with local or national publishing. Thus for only a small number of children in the socio-economically advantaged classes, are books readily available, and even then, in a language other than Arabic.

7.3.3 Early reading habits and exposure to orality Very few preschoolers are read to in *fusha* because of the high illiteracy rates of parents, and also because of the paucity of children's books mentioned above. The complementary nature of reading with orality may show that spurring the improvement of reading in the Arab region may not be necessarily answered by more book outlets and a quantitative increase in books edited in *fusha*. Story books and written materials in a language, which is as close to colloquial Arabic as possible, might prove closer to the tradition of orality which prevails in the Arab culture and therefore, more useful to the Arab child.

7.4 The Arabic orthographic system

Goody and Watt (1962) introduced the general assumption that there was a strong correlation between the complexity of writing systems and their structural make-up on the one hand, and the spread of literacy on the other. Moreover, there is a hypothesis that some writing systems might present easier access to basic literacy skills than others. Another group of researchers,[24] Stevenson, Stigler, Lucker, Lee, Hsu and Kitamura (1982) believe however, that literacy, in most languages and writing systems is acquired by young learners in formal education settings in roughly the same amount of time and with similar overall difficulty. The extent to which the processes of reading acquisition may differ across diverse languages and writing systems remains a question in need of further research.

The purpose of the following section is to shed some light on the relationship between Arabic orthography and the Arabic reading process with the purpose of uncovering issues and outlining a framework for a research agenda for Arabic reading acquisition based on operational Arabic script reform suggestions.

7.4.1 The Arabic writing system The Arabic writing system is an alphabetic system with 28 basic letters. A distinction should be made between the *Arabic writing system* (the way in which the Arabic language is represented graphemically) and the *Arabic script or alphabet* (a set of letters which are used for that graphemic representation). Maamouri (1977) observed that the Arabic diglossic situation does not improve the arduous task of phonographic interpretation which is at the base of the reading process in *fusha*. The gap between *fusha* and the colloquial is detrimental to the acquisition and retention of the basic reading skills because, in that situation, the learner is not provided with the existing reinforcing opportunities which come from early mother tongue acquisition. When learning to read Arab young and adult readers cannot put their inherent native linguistic competence in colloquial Arabic to task. They cannot use their lexical familiarity with the basic Arabic syllabic structure, consonantal clustering, phoneme combination and morphological and prosodic pattern structures which, though not necessarily identical between *fusha* and the Arabic dialects, show important striking similarities.

7.4.1.1 The consonants of Arabic orthography Most of the consonants of the Arabic orthographic system, (24 out of 28), are composed of one or more base forms with distinguishing variant shapes. There is a close similarity between most of the letters (22 out of 28) to the extent that some of them are only distinguished from each other by additional dots or strokes. Furthermore, the forms of most letters differ depending on their word position. Each letter of the Arabic orthographic system

requires three to four positional variants to account for its initial, mid-word, final and sometimes, non-connecting occurrences. A slight gain for text decoding process comes from the use of final letter variants which signal word boundaries. The *hamza* (the glottal stop / ' /), an exceptional oddity in the Arabic writing system, has more than twenty variants, the mastery of which requires intensive training from the most educated and highly literate Arabs.[25]

Since most letters of the Arabic writing system do not occur in isolation and since traditional Arabic writing has always made ample use of ligatures and letter combinations to save typesetting time or to increase the aesthetic beauty of the script, orthographic variation and the use of multiple letter forms became a significant learning problem and an obstacle to printing. The orthographic variation which characterizes the Arabic script increases the number of the units of writing (graphemes) the child has to learn (more than 60 base forms). The plurality of letter shapes stemming from the cursive nature of the Arabic script, which initially came into use as a handwritten medium, constitutes a considerable burden for the learner. It has also hindered the development of Arabic printing because of the imposing basic matrix it creates (between 400 and 600 basic forms according to some).

7.4.1.2 Diacritics and vocalic representation The Arabic script also contains signs and distinguishing diacritical forms (or diacritics) for vocalic representation. Long vowels use the four remaining letters of the Arabic alphabet. The Arabic writing system shows great modernity in its use of these letters (*'imaala, waaw, yaa'*) in a way which precurses the Traeger-Smith system of vocalic length representation in the English phonology of the late 1950s. The three short vowels of *fusha* (/a u i/) are represented by additional diacritics (or not at all) in what Youssef calls an "acclaimed shorthand appearance."[26]

The strict sound-symbol correspondence between the letters on the reading page and their spoken equivalent shows a gap resulting from the existence of at least two new and non-represented vowels (/e o/) in most Arabic dialects. The non-representation of (regional) vocalic variation does not constitute in itself a serious problem for reading acquisition. What does, is the failure to represent vowels in a language, *fusha*, which attributes most of its grammatical functions (at both the morphological and syntactic levels) to the vocalic structure, leaving the lexical structure to the consonants. The negative effect of the missing vocalic structure on the smallest reading unit is shown in the following example from Maamouri (1983). If we look at what would be in the Arabic writing system the exact and full graphemic equivalent of the following graphemic form K-T-B-T, we will have the five following readings in *fusha* with their corresponding semantic interpretations:

(a) katabtu "I wrote;" (b) katabta "You (singular/masculine) wrote;" (c) katabti "You (singular/feminine) wrote;" (d) katabat "She wrote;" and (e) kutibat "It (singular/feminine) was written."

The use of the shadda to indicate gemination or consonantal doubling in the Arabic orthographic system can complicate matters and make unvocalized reading even more complex. The following example from Youssef (1981) will show how a trilateral root ʿ-L-M (for English "to know") can give six readings, which are all unambiguous if vocalized. These readings are: *ʿilm* "science," *ʿalima* "he knew," *ʿulima* "it became known," *ʿallama* "he taught," *ʿullima* "he was taught," and finally, *ʿalam* "a flag."

The reader must bring to task considerable additional knowledge of syntax, vocabulary, and sometimes, contextual interpretation in order to obtain correct and meaningful vocalization and reach word recognition. The reading process seems to have been completely reversed from what it normally is in other languages. The findings of Wagner and Spratt (1993:240) that orthographic features of Arabic are common stumbling blocks for word comprehension among young learners of Arabic confirm all the above.

7.4.1.3 Arabic script and the vocalization problem Vocalization is an important idiosyncrasy of the Arabic writing system. It is its most inhibiting feature to reading acquisition, learning achievement in general, and the quality of education in the Arab region. Mahmoud Taymour (1953) calls it "nothing less than a linguistic disintegration which is destined to rob the language of its essential native and primary characteristics."[27] The diacritical markings (or diacritics) which represent the Arabic vowels, do not, as a rule, appear in most printed materials in the Arab region because the nature and construction of the Arabic fonts do not allow a liberal use. This started as a problem of time and cost economy when scribes were manually responsible for dissemination of written documents. Until recent reforms, schooling used vocalization (*shakl*) as part of the curriculum in the primary school curriculum. Young learners were asked to vocalize all their texts by introducing the required diacritics which represented the vowels in writing. This exercise was meant to show the existence of an internalized knowledge of the grammatical rules of *fusha* which is reflected in thpositioning of appropriate diacritics for morphologically-correct vocalic patterns at word level and grammatically acceptable case endings at sentence level. When used in primary school books, vocalized texts seem to be used in pure deference to the needs of the young and inexperienced learner. The use of diacritics seems to be limited to whatever length of time is considered sufficient for the learner to be initiated to reading without them.

The role and place of final vowel (representing case or inflectional) endings in sentence reading known in traditional Arabic grammar terminology as *'i'raab*, requires an active prior knowledge of syntax. Arabs consider *'i'raab* a technicality only necessary in reading poetry and in the most formal reading situations. Most Arabs follow the common practice of not pronouncing word endings marking the part of speech and its function at the end of a sentence (such as the use of the one single unmarked form *kitaab* for "book" instead of the six inflectionally marked forms of *kitaabun*, *kitaaban*, *kitaabin* and *kitaabu*, *kitaaba* and *kitaabi*. The exercise of guessing the correct *'i'raab* has become a central activity in an average classroom which requires scanning the context and conjuring the appropriate grammatical rule.

The *shakl* test was an important part of the national sixth year end of primary curriculum test in Tunisia. Because of the difficulty of *fusha* syntactical accord and agreement rules, most educated Arabs prefer to use the traditionally accepted pausal forms which allow them to remain silent and not use case-endings in sentence-final positions. Teachers in formal schooling environment, however, do not allow students to take advantage of this laxity because it may hide a lack of knowledge of the most difficult rules of grammar. Because the relaxation of *'i'raab* rules exists and is already tolerated among Arabic traditional grammarians and Arab users, many Arab reformers and linguists such as Anis Frayha and Ibrahim Al-Samarrai, have argued for an attempt to de-emphasize the role of *'i'raab* in modern grammar teaching and therefore, in reading and written texts.

Modern pedagogical changes introduced of late in the teaching of Arabic in primary and secondary schools seem to have relaxed the explicit use of the *shakl* rules in *fusha*. The consequent integration of *fusha* syntax in a more modern global text-approach made the vocalization exercise look pedagogically 'archaic' and, as a result of its disappearance, diminished the exactness of the grammatical performance of young Arab learners. These learners receive now less training in schools for the initial reading task and seem to leave school with rudimentary reading skills, if and when they graduate. These often limited skills are not enough to help students face up to the demands of secondary and tertiary advanced reading of Arabic newspapers and books with more specialized content.[28]

One could conclude from the above, that the problem of the Arabic script is mostly a matter of *script management*. Arab users have to make the extra effort to use all the ammunition provided by their writing tradition (full use of all diacritical marks) in order to increase the efficiency and usefulness of their writing system. Appropriate research comparing the results of vocalized versus unvocalized reading habits at all levels would prove useful in rethinking the relevant pedagogical policies in formal and non-formal education. In addition, few elements

of *script design* could perhaps be added (use of one letter form only per sound unit) to give the Arabic script its full functionality and enhance its positive characteristics.

8. 0 Arabic language policy and planning

This section will summarize recent efforts relating to language and educational reforms in the Arab region and will focus on four areas of Arabic language concern, namely: (1) principles of Arabic language reforms, (2) grammar simplification, (3) vocabulary enrichment and (4) writing system reforms.

The purpose is to identify a few concrete reform project orientations and introduce a few language planning actions with value-added potential. The future rethinking (status planning) and retooling (corpus planning) needs and possible directions for Arabic language policy and planning will also be discussed in this section.

8.1 Arabic language reform attempts

Attempts at reforming the Arabic language reflect three major positions. The traditional school strongly believes that Arabic is still adequate and requires no significant change. The Cairo Academy is interested in simplifying the language but without major deviations from its prescriptive framework. A third group, still the weakest of the three, stresses the need of radical modifications of the rules of Arabic.

8.1.1 Arabic reforms and vernacularization For years, a number of scholars have thought that the gap between the spoken colloquial Arabic and *fusha* is too great and should be narrowed to make reading accessible to young school learners and the average person. During his term as President of the Cairo Academy, Taha Hussein declared that education should be as accessible to the people as 'air and water' and that since Classical Arabic does not cope with the needs of modern life it should take advantage of the richness that could be derived from the dialects. The use of Arabic vernacular forms has always been opposed by the traditional school. Moreover, Arabic language academies do not agree on the issue. Lorenz (1984), looking at the language planning activities of the two main Arabic language academies of Cairo and Damascus, observes that they differ significantly in that the former takes a more eclectic approach and looks at the vernacular forms of the language for some of its proposed simplification reforms, while the latter bases changes and innovations on Classical Arabic only.

8.1.2 Frayha's cultivated *fusha* reform If one looks at the most prominent Arabic language planning reforms of this century, one name emerges: Anis Frayha of the American University of Beirut. His work

illustrates the most daring proposal to date in Arabic language reform. Frayha's position is based on the promotion of a descriptive approach to reforming Arabic. In his two important 1955 and 1958 essays on *Arabic made easy* and *The simplification of the linguistic rules of Arabic,* Frayha starts from the premise that: (1) *fusha* cannot replace the colloquials as a naturally spoken language; and (2) that it is not practical to adopt local dialects or impose one language variety on the whole Arabic-speaking region. Frayha's proposal for Arabic reform was based on the following principles: (a) use of a *cultivated fusha* Arabic free from archaic Classical Arabic features and closely related to the various colloquials; (b) use of this proposed 'cultivated Arabic' as the literary medium; (c) codification and standardization of the phonological, morphological, and syntactic features of this reformed *educated fusha;* (d) adoption of the new language standards by all Arabs; and (e) adoption by all Arabs of a Romanized script reform.

Contrary to nearly all the other groups of Arab language reformers, who sought and still seek the basis for their reexamination of the Arabic language primarily in the literature of grammatical and lexical works of earlier periods, Frayha advocated the study of the modern usage of *fusha* Arabic. His proposal was not however, well received and the debate among the proponents for preserving the purity of *fusha* and those advocating the incorporation of colloquial forms into it lasted over a decade and does not seem to have abated until now.

8.2 Secularization and simplification of Arabic grammar

The difficulty of Arabic grammar has been blamed for the failure of successful language education in the Arab region. Many believe that the reason for this failure stems from a millenary old body of rules and an archaic teaching methodology based on rote learning and automatic application of rules of Classical *fusha*. Strong proponents of traditional grammar had and still hold sway all over the Arab region. These include El-Azhar in Egypt, the Zitouna Mosque in Tunisia and El-Qarawayn in Morocco. These institutions and their underlying kuttaab and Quranic instruction structure were until recently in charge of perpetuating the traditional approach of Arabic grammar with its Archaic terminology and teaching methods.

The most important first step in efforts aimed at reforming grammar was to secularize it along with the Arabic language itself and to move it out of the hold of the religious establishment and under the administrative authority of the public school structure. In his many seminal essays on the problems of Arabic, Taha Hussein (1938, 1956, 1957, 1959) was one of the most vocal advocates of secularizing the Arabic language and simplifying its rules. He opposed the ideological focusing surrounding Arabic and tried to shift that focusing towards the urgent needs of "making grammar and writing easy." Reforming "the

fusha language for the education of the people" is imperative if Arabs, do not want [in Hussein's terms] to "...face the dreadful prospect of Classical Arabic becoming, whether we want it or not, a religious language and the sole possession of the men of religion."[29] As a result of his first advocacy efforts, appropriate status planning decisions began to take place in Egypt in the thirties and spread gradually elsewhere in the Arab region. The Egyptian Ministry of Education assumed the role of modernizing language instruction when it set up a committee whose task it was to simplify the Arabic grammar. Egypt was a real pioneer in the advocacy of grammar simplification followed by Syria and Iraq. A draft report was submitted by the grammar reform committee in 1951 to the Cairo Academy which approved it. However, the publication of the final report on "Freeing the Arabic Grammar" was delayed until 1958. The real implementation of the reform itself was still delayed until the late fifties when the first textbooks based on the proposed reforms began to appear in Egypt, Syria and Iraq.[30]

This report introduced many significant changes to modernize the classical terminology of Arabic grammar and decrease its cumbersome weight on the Arab learners. These terminological changes were rejected by Syria in the sixties.[31] No significant progress has been achieved in that direction during the last three to four decades.

According to Arab scholars, the Academy's reform are neither sufficient nor daring. Because of difficulties encountered with Arabic diglossia, some of these scholars showed that the complexities of Arabic grammar could only be reduced with the introduction of all or some of the following structural changes: (a) reduction of the most exceptional cases for maximum consistency; (b) a simplification of the declensional system; (c) freedom from multiplicity of forms; and most importantly, (d) selection of uses which have their counterparts in the colloquials.

Alternative simplification suggestions were advocated: (1) the use of one dual and one sound plural ending instead of two; (2) the use of one declension instead of three for each of the so-called five nouns; (3) the use of irregular nouns with only two cases as fully declinable nouns; (4) the retention of the sound feminine plural as an ordinary noun having three case endings; and finally, (5) the formation of the imperfect which could be made predictable for the majority of the trilateral sound verbs.[32]

None of the above mentioned simplification modifications were accepted by the traditionalists nor based, in most cases, on actual *fusha* usage, so they were eventually dismissed. Formal efforts at language planning, such as those of the academies, have only succeeded in preserving the *fusha* with or without a broadening of the place given to modern usage and correct simplified modern styles.

8.3 Vocabulary enrichment

The task of developing scientific and technological vocabulary has been pursued by the Arab academies and specialized institutions created for that purpose in the Arab region to take care of this vital responsibility. The major aim of the Arabic language academies has been the renovation of *fusha*, while at the same time protecting it from the danger of the infiltration of colloquial borrowings from within, and the infiltration of loan words from the outside world. The most important issue in the modernization efforts of *fusha* vocabulary concerned the use of loan words from Western languages. There were, and still are, controversial views about the danger that these foreign words might bring with them linguistic elements incompatible with the Semitic characteristics of the language.

The guiding principle behind the academies' terminological work is to use suitable Arabic equivalents in cases for which no Arabic word previously existed. Their work, therefore, is generally characterized by slow procedures and the inability to meet the demands created by the rapidly developing scientific and technological fields. The relexification efforts of the Cairo Academy, for instance, do not exceed an average of 2,000 annually approved terms and the total list of terms approved between 1957 and 1964 by this influential academy does not exceed 20,000 terms.[33] Because of the prevailing overemphasis of academy members on Arabic equivalents, *fusha* does not seem about to efficiently adapt and expand its lexicon to include new concepts and inventions.[34]

It is through the incorporation of colloquial terminology that the users of *Modern fusha* manage the expansion of the contextual usefulness of their language. This is only natural since this strategy is part of the daily communication strategies used by most Arabs when they do not feel obliged to switch to English or French to find the words they need to express themselves. Numerous examples can illustrate this situation. In a 1996 advertisement in Amman, the Jordanian Arabic colloquial term for "sparkplugs," *bawaaji* was used. It is interesting to note that this term, a borrowing from French bougie(s), became used in a country where English is the dominant Language of Wider Communication (=LWC). It is possible that *bawaaji* could have been borrowed from Lebanese colloquial Arabic. The TA term *mɔ̀arba* was used in a 1997 ad for "mattress" in Tunisia. This term appeared at the same time as *hawaashi lawlabiyya*, another competing term for the same meaning. The latter, coined from *fusha*, reflects existing classicization efforts. A quick test on the acceptability of both terms by the Tunisian public revealed that even university-level Arabic professors could not guess what this last term meant or to what concrete reality it referred.

Because the Arab academies approve the introduction of new terms in the language, without any real power of policy implementation, and

because they play a purely advisory role, words which are put to common use are not necessarily those which receive their official blessing.

The vernacularization of *fusha* vocabulary had been used in Egypt in 1954 when the Ministry of Education selected a new series of readers based on the global or sentence approach. These readers tried to use Egyptian colloquial words and phrases at the beginning to serve as a transition to *fusha* in the first three years of primary schooling. However, lexicon vernacularization, as a language policy failed, defeated by the conservative forces which stopped it. The Egyptian readers were criticized for (1) failing to help the children to read fast and accurately, and (2) for lowering their vocabulary growth in *fusha*.[35]

It is in the area of vocabulary enrichment that the most meaningful language reforms can take place with foreseeable results in the foreseeable future. The new and growing demands of everyday life require retooling measures of lexical instrumentalization which will target the learning needs of young Arab school children, mostly in the rural and unreached areas. These students lack the most common written terms for their everyday life needs and some of the most frequently used concepts in their environment.

8.4 Arabic writing system reforms

In spite of Gallagher's remark that "...[Arabic] is burdened with an inadequate and ossified script which needs overhauling and simplification," [140], Arabs have always looked at the Arabic script as "a faithful preserver and gatekeeper of [their] timeless heritage."[36] For this reason, they have been fascinated by its aesthetic beauty and have always opposed any reform that aimed at changing it. In 1938, Abdelaziz Fahmi submitted a reform proposal to the Cairo Academy which was based on the principle of romanizing the letters of the Arabic alphabet except for those that the Latin script could not transliterate. With his daring proposal, Fahmi wanted to simplify reading by eliminating all unnecessary mistakes which may result from an incomplete vocalization. A debate followed about whether the errors that occurred frequently in Arabic reading were in fact the responsibility of the reader or that of the writer.

According to Roland Meynet (1971), more than 300 script reforms were presented to the Cairo Academy ranging from those that advocated the utilization of the romanization concept to minor reforms dealing with letter shapes or diacritical markings. After half a century of passionate debate, the question of the Arabic script reform is still pending and has even been perhaps somewhat forgotten. The situation today can be summarized with the following points.
(1) There is a consensus against any Romanization of the Arabic script.

(2) Most script-reformers seem to favor the preservation of the Arabic characters with a simplification of their variations.
(3) No decision was made on any simplification reforms of the *hamza*, which thus, kept its 23 variations.
(4) The Quran and the Prophet's *hadith* must always be totally vocalized.
(5) Vocalization will only be used in the first years of primary schools but must gradually disappear from the secondary grades with few and limited exceptions where vocalization is required such as with names and some difficult grammar points.

However, important modifications in the printed forms of the Arabic script have been recently proposed in Morocco by Ahmed Lakhdhar Ghazal at the *Institut d'études et de recherches sur l'arabisation* (IERA, Rabat). Lakhdhar Ghazal's main idea was to simplify the orthographic variation by using one graphic form only in all positions. Codage Arabe Unifié (CODAR-U) is a "Unified Arabic Alphabet Project" focused mainly on the relationship of the script to printing and aimed at the needed standardization and normalization of the letters of the Arabic script for use in telecommunications. As opposed to some of the previous proposals, this reform did not have a direct pedagogical, learner-centered focus. It has been implemented in Morocco for a while but does not seem to have achieved general acceptance. Its utility may have already been considered obsolete with the emergence of the new desktop technologies, which make typesetting in Arabic easier, less problematic and less costly.

9. 0 Arabic language planning recommendations

Following a practice-oriented perspective, this section will offer a model of language planning actions, which are presented in the form of status language planning and corpus language planning proposals. These recommendations are pragmatic and closely connected to the existing realities of the Arabic-in-education situation. They are operational and are based on well-documented projects, which have been successfully implemented in other language reform contexts. These recommendations could form the basis of a realistic model for immediate reform action and a rethinking and retooling framework that could be used by any Arab country ready to take the difficult step of challenging the dominant paradigms of the Arabic language and Arab education.

It is this author's hope that the present practice-affecting-policy framework will lead to positive experimentation, important policy decisions and implementation. The following reform areas concern (a) the vernacularization of the formal classroom discourse; (b) the use of the vernacular in early childhood development and in youth and adult literacy, (c) script reform for better reading practice and (d) the

conceptualization of users' language tools which relate to grammar and the lexicon.

9.1 Status language planning recommendations

9.1.1 Current Arab political choices and language policy action

While there seems to be a general consensus in the Arab world on the need to reform the Arabic language, very little progress has been achieved in the past decades. The failure to unify the Arab front combined with the existence of conflicting ideologies, has effectively barred the way to any legitimate reform because of the fear that reform could further impair or reduce the unifying force of the heritage language. The prevailing political mood of the nineties in the Arab countries however, seems to have slowly shifted towards a relaxation of this ideological grip on the dominant language of the region.

Recent events indicate that some Arab countries are slowly opening up to the implications of accelerated educational reforms. A good case in point is Morocco, where in a speech on 24 August 1994, King Hassan II advocated the use of the dialects in the first years of elementary education. More recently, also in Morocco, Ismail Alaoui, Minister of National Education in the new government, in an answer to a question about Arabization, declared: "I think that the error which has been made so far is to consider that Arabization is an ideological problem, while it should have been apprehended in a different way. . . . The essential problem lies in the duality that comes from the fact that children learn in school an Arabic language which they do not speak the same way in the street or at home. One should define how to best reconcile these two related languages in order to see all Moroccans, through universal schooling and generalized learning, speak an improved Arabic . . . an Arabic which is more elevated than the colloquial but which does not respect 100 per cent of the *fusha* grammar rules. It is my opinion, that the problem of Arabic is technical and sociological and that it must be studied very carefully before one could make any final judgment on Arabization."(30 March 1998)

These two positions signal that the Moroccan political scene may be ready for an educational reform strategy which could do much to stop the deterioration of the national language capacity and which could also enhance the quality of education in the country, irrespective of what the other Arab countries are doing. This seems to be a more efficient and realistic way to engage in the Arabic language reform planning process rather than attempting to manufacture a pan-Arab consensus on any of the above mentioned issues regarding Arabic and Arabic diglossia. A first recommendation is, therefore, to contain reform efforts within the confines of each individual country and its specific sociolinguistic language continuum.

9.1.2 Vernacularization and a linguistically responsive teaching pedagogy

Since the focus of language-in-education planning in the system of education in any Arab country is undeniably going to center on the Arabic language used in formal instruction, the first reform action should perhaps aim at the language practices of Arab classrooms in primary and secondary schooling, and even, possibly, in adult literacy classes. Due to the disparities between standard school Arabic and that used in the home, there is a need to address the linguistic discontinuity in the classroom by adopting a linguistically responsive pedagogy. This pedagogy should adapt instruction in the direction of the learners' home language variety. It needs to incorporate the norms and behaviors of the community in the classroom in order to increase the immediate relevancy of the learning process by connecting it to the learner's personal experience, familiar topics and concrete real-world concerns. This linguistically compatible pedagogy would enable schools to reduce the linguistic insecurity encountered by young learners. The incorporation of the community's culture into the classroom should not be looked at with the traditional prejudice of standard correctness. It should, instead, be viewed as a pedagogy that fits the school language to the learners' language thereby using the learner's linguistic skills as a basis for helping them take part in their own learning experience.

Arab students should be encouraged to become critical observers of the language practices around them. Interactional sociolinguistics and ethnographic-style research methodologies should help Arab teachers and education planners in leading students at all levels to be involved in the analysis of the content and significance of particular Arabic language uses and speech events in both *fusha* and the colloquials. Other aspects of linguistic interaction in and outside of the classroom such as the Arabic discourse types and their situational contexts or the various forms of code-switching and what triggers them should also be addressed to increase the linguistic awareness of both Arab teachers and learners. Only exploration of and critical reflection on regional and local variation in the individual and group's language uses can improve the quality and sustainability of learning Arabic and in Arabic. The teaching profession should be prepared for such a paradigm change in the pedagogy of Arabic language teaching. This preparation should become an official part of the Arabic teacher training curriculum, and must include relevant training in applied linguistics and collaborative pedagogical approaches.

This second reform proposal might look modest but is, in fact, extremely critical. It aims at the legitimization of current *de facto* language practice and centers on a major change in the standards of the Arabic language used in instruction. It also focuses on capacity building and appropriate teacher training pedagogies. A significant mobilization effort is required

at the level of decision makers for the implementation of such a comprehensive set of reforms.

9.1.3 *First literacy* in colloquial Arabic

In spite of the previous and repeated failures of all Arab proposals to introduce reading in the colloquial, the vernacularization of Arabic reading is still a linguistically relevant pedagogy which deserves attention because of its great potential for overhauling the educational system in the region. The approach advocated by this author adopts a methodological perspective which focuses mainly on the pragmatic use of vernacular Arabic in the two areas of education where this practice may prove acceptable and exceptionally rewarding. These areas are early childhood development, and youth and adult literacy. It is important to note that both situations deal with the acquisition of *first literacy* defined here as real mother-tongue literacy.

The incorporation of colloquial Arabic into the oral classroom discourse will reduce miscommunication and improve learning. The use of vernacularization in the early stages of Arabic literacy acquisition can bring invaluable assistance to Arab learners. It would make the learning of the decoding skills easier by connecting the letters of the Arabic orthographic system to known and more accessible language patterns and forms. The process of Arabic reading becomes relatively easy because it is based on the learner's dialect. Vernacular literacy can play a role in bringing these changes about and promoting a culture of sustainable, higher-level reading competence. Some non-governmental organization (NGO) projects are successfully using vernacular adult literacy in Egypt to improve the learners' motivation and learning achievement. Dalia Abbas, a program officer with the Egyptian British Adult Literacy Training Project (ALTP) enthusiastically relates her own experience with training illiterate adults on how to write and publish newsletters and books. *Aswatna* ("Our voices"), a selection of student writing from Qena and Menoufia, includes more than 100 pieces written by exceptionally responsive literacy students. Because it is the product of real-life experience, vernacular writing is now used to stimulate class discussions and promote an enhanced mobilization.[37]

This third recommendation is a 'daring' policy reform which has been only possible in few and rare cases in the Arab region. The Egyptian case seems to have been tolerated in part because of pedagogical experimentation introduced by foreign consultants and experts. This new area of vernacular Arabic literacy must be rigorously documented and fully evaluated for transferability purposes. A comparison of the reading levels of the learners graduating from these innovative Arabic classes should necessarily be compared to the results of traditional literacy methods used in the respective countries and elsewhere in the Arab region.

9.1.4 Early colloquial Arabic reading and intergenerational colloquial Arabic literacies The current predicament of preschoolers (boys and girls ages 3 to 6) in the Arab region, mentioned earlier, is aggravated by an insufficient school readiness which is partly due to the weakening of the traditional *kuttaab* structure and the scarcity of kindergartens. Myers (1995) showed the importance of the correlation between early intervention in children's lives and higher school enrollment, lower repetition rates, lower drop-out rates and general school success. The findings emphasize the need for enhancing the early childhood development (=ECD) structure in the Arab region. To ensure that children increase their cognitive abilities in the learning stage years (3-4) and the ready-for-school stage years (5-6) would involve the provision of appropriate language stimulation. Arab preschoolers would then be better prepared to associate the written word with the spoken as they encounter higher-level language relationships.

This early introduction to decoding skills and Arabic reading acquisition can best be done if the child is presented with colloquial Arabic reading materials that are familiar because they are already part of the child's acquired set of linguistic habits. Early colloquial Arabic reading should be part of an accelerated reading process in Arab kindergartens or *kuttaabs*, which will lead to the attainment of higher levels of learning. Because of the lack of recent and sufficient information on the early linguistic development of Arab children, a comparative study of early reading acquisition in colloquial and in *fusha* seems necessary.

The early introduction to reading is however, not possible without the participation of the family structure. Zigler and Muenchow (1992) have shown the critical importance of parents' involvement in educating their children. This involvement can be critical to the lasting success of a *headstart* because the parents are the child's first and foremost teachers and make a vital contribution to the child's cognitive development. Moreover, ECD activities have best results when they involve the parents and the whole family environment. Experts agree that nothing better prepares the child for reading than being read to. The most important thing a parent can do in order to help a child learn to read is to read to him or her early and often. The high illiteracy rate among Arab parents is an obviously significant obstacle to creating an early literate environment for a young child.

Because of the high rates of illiteracy among the older Arab generations, a strategy of reading activism in colloquial Arabic becomes highly advisable. A *headstart*-type program in colloquial Arabic would undoubtedly benefit both Arab children and their parents. Storybooks in colloquial Arabic could be used in an intergenerational approach to Arabic first literacy acquisition. These books constitute an easy and accelerated access to reading skills by illiterate or low literate Arab parents (mostly mothers)

who could then use their newly acquired skills to significantly enhance the cognitive awakening of their children.

9.1.5 Reading Centers and the "Book Flood Approach"

In the United States, the mobilization campaigns on the importance of reading have led to many interesting initiatives. Some of these activities are based on reading clinics and centers in public libraries and in various other community centers, which involve not only families and communities but also businesses and other types of organizations. Ruth Graves of "Reading is Fundamental" (RIF), which serves 3.8 million US children nationwide, believes that parents need support from the "Whole Village" if children are to learn to read. To illustrate her point, Graves uses the example of Nestlé which has adopted 100 RIF schools and is sponsoring their various reading activities in California.

Likewise, Arab ECD, youth and adult reading initiatives should be sponsored by various socio-economically prominent individuals or groups in the Arab community. Arab Foundations, associations, successful businessmen, even athletes and entertainment stars and celebrities could adopt an early reading center or a colloquial Arabic literacy program and promote the publishing of books and other documents in their local dialects. Another example of a successful approach has been documented by Elley and Mangubai (1983) in their research on the Fijian 'book flood schools.' This involved the wide distribution of high-interest illustrated story books with significantly high returns in language and literacy acquisition. This book flood approach could certainly be used with important gains especially considering the rich oral literature of the Arab region. The *khuraafaat*, the fabulous tales and yarns of traditional Arab folklore, could provide a good starting base for this high-interest colloquial Arabic story reading campaign. Contemporary Arab writers will have to actively participate in this vernacular book production, to help set the new norms and standards of first Arabic literacy. In order to broaden the Arab children's horizons and motivate their learning curiosity, interesting and culturally diverse international stories could also be translated. Hedi Balegh (1997), a vocal advocate of colloquial Tunisian Arabic, has just published a Tunisian Arabic translation of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* which is already taking its place in the world of young Tunisian learners. Many more books, and especially picture books, should be made available to enrich the reading experiences of the young Arab child.

Institutions which have done a lot to improve education and the conditions of children in the Arab region and the world, such as The World Bank, Unicef, or UNESCO, should give this recommendation their full attention. They should help in the promotion of vernacular Arabic ECD and first literacy strategies in the Arab region. Because of

their leadership and the high respect they command, support by these institutions of innovative initiatives of this kind is vital as only these institutions have the potential profile to convince Arab governments and decision makers to give vernacularization a try.

9.1.6 Script visibility and reading assessment

In her research on the nature and characteristics of Arabic reading, Rima Azzam (1989,1990) examined the misreadings and misspellings that Arab primary school children make and identified the diacritical markings of vocalization as the main culprits.

In spite of the contrary opinion of many script reformers and Arab educators who devote all their attention to the consonants and believe that nothing should be done about the diacritical marks, Arabic script visibility helps take away the distortions of the reading process in *fusha* by supplying all the needed cognitive ingredients.[38] Nothing less than *total script visibility* (inclusion of all diacritical markings) in all written documents in the print-scarce Arab region can improve the efficiency of *fusha* reading. Total script visibility and the reintroduction of the complete vocalic structure in their due place will reinforce the vocalic patterns and build-up the feeling of linguistic security and self-confidence that all Arab children and adults need to have in order to read and fully use their language. Because it transfers the responsibility of the knowledge-based grammatical decision-making from the reader to the text writer, the promotion of total script visibility may be a rather difficult task to implement. One might need to do it in steps and start with the promotion of a functional (only those diacritics which are vital to reading) script visibility first.

The principle of fuller script visibility is an important paradigm change from the commonly used distorted Arabic graphemic system. Ideally, it should be advocated at the national plan level to encourage vocalized printing mainly by subsidizing some or all of its cost. After all, if it is important to have a vocalized Quranic text to eliminate reading difficulties and unnecessary ambiguities, the same principle should apply to school learning and formal and non-formal education instruction. The late J Milton Cowan (Editor of the *Hans Wehr Arabic Dictionary* and Professor of linguistics at Cornell) once suggested an important language planning impact could be effected by choosing 100 of the most read books of the Arabic literary heritage and printing them in a fully vocalized edition. These special books could then be disseminated to the schools of the Arab region. Turning reading in Arabic from an arduous task to a source of accurate understanding would be well worth the cost of such an operation.

The principle of total script visibility should be completely integrated in a renovated pedagogy of Arabic language curriculum and classroom

education. All textbooks for all grades should be vocalized and students should use vocalization in all their written production. Teachers should integrate vocalization in their pedagogical lesson planning in order to reinforce its use. It is true that there will be mistakes and errors originating from the lack of precise knowledge of the *fusha*. But the returns would be great. Young and adult learners will find reading in Arabic an enjoyable and profitable exercise and their motivation for reading will certainly increase. The burden of a full and complete pre-requisite knowledge of Arabic grammar would be on the writer and not on the reader. Though cumbersome, this pedagogical effort would greatly facilitate the learning attainment process in the early stages of formal and non-formal education. It would also instill new patterns of usage in the reading behavior of Arabs. If, for instance, all the word endings are vocalized, learners would not have to guess at inflectional endings anymore. They would not try to use pausal speech forms as evasive strategies to hide their ignorance of the rules of Arabic grammar.

Script visibility should perhaps be linked at the same time to a simplification of the Arabic orthographic system similar to the one advocated in Morocco by Ahmed Lakhdhar Ghazal (1982).[39] The use of the diacritical marks and the use of only one letter form should help reduce the complexities of the Arabic reading process and improve Arabic reading results.

In view of the above, this last recommendation, which is more concerned with issues of language management and language design, should lead to research projects in Arabic reading assessment designed to answer some of the following questions: (1) How and to what extent do the vowel diacritical marks affect reading comprehension? (2) How does the added density of graphemic representation in vocalized texts affect the cognitive processes directly related to Arabic text comprehension; (3) What is the utility or non-utility of diacritical marks for beginning versus proficient readers in Arabic?

One tool which could be useful in this research in the Arab region would be the development and adaptation to Arabic of the *Zigzag Test*, an on-line technique used by Ciesielski & Reinwein (1989) in the assessment of the French competence of young primary school learners in Québec, Canada and Tunisia.

9.2 Corpus language planning recommendations

These recommendations concern the production of the necessary tools for the Arabic language reforms suggested above. They concern grammar codification and lexicon enrichment.

9.2.1 A grammar of contemporary Arabic

In March 1972, Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik produced an interesting English grammar, which they called *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (=GCE). This grammar reflects the spread of contemporary English throughout the world and aims at both a synchronic description and comprehensive analysis. GCE treats English irrespective of frontiers and defines its field as "no less than the grammar of educated English current in the second half of the twentieth century in the world's major English-speaking countries." GCE is defined as a common core which is surrounded by special varieties and the authors have made "appropriate use of facilities available in our generation for bringing spoken English fully within the grammarian's scope."[40]

The description of the GCE is an appropriate blueprint for what is needed for Arabic language needs if it wants to fix the inherent confusion. A "Contemporary Grammar of Arabic (=CGA)" would provide an updated descriptive codification. It would include language patterns from the various literary periods and styles in written *fusha*, representative samples from the written media currently used in the Arab countries, and a recording of samples of representative and varied oral production from local and regional varieties of colloquial and *fusha* Arabic. It would include most of the common language forms currently in use in the Arab region. The grammatical framework of CGA should draw both on the long-established tradition and the insights of modern linguistics. It should aim at simplicity and the avoidance of excessive use of the traditional Arabic grammar terminology. This project could be a one-country based project but it could probably be placed under the umbrella of an organization such as the Arab League's ALECSO which could help with the eventual target of pan-Arab depth and comprehensiveness.

9.2.2 Lexical instrumentalization

Western culture, and more recently, globalization have produced an ever-increasing number of new concepts for which no words exist in Arabic. The Arab region has been daily confronted with the serious problem of expressing this growing terminological need. The creation of scientific and technological terminology is a major challenge to the Arab region. Moreover, Arab children and adults are constantly challenged by the non-availability of concepts relating to the simplest needs of their daily life activities. It is difficult for instance, to find terms which can describe appropriately and precisely the rich wardrobe of modern Arab men and women. There are no Arabic words for the tools or auto-parts used in a mechanic's shop, and Arab women use kitchen utensils for which they cannot refer because of lack of Arabic terms. Lexical instrumentalization is therefore an important need which is not yet

taken care of by the efforts of all the existing Arabic language academies and terminology-focused institutions.

Whether one follows the principle of coining new terms according to productive Arabic patterns or whether borrowing from European languages is preferred, one problem will remain: How many of these new terms have gained or will gain acceptance in common usage? The major problem in Arabic lexicology is not so much the invention of new terms as it is assuring that they are used and become part of the language stock. While the academies of Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad have produced and continue to produce vast numbers of technical terms in almost all fields of knowledge, it is obvious that the difficulties of language regulation have been underestimated or even neglected by Arab language and education planners.

The lack of standardization of existing terms is an additional problem. The vocabulary of *Modern fusha* is not standardized. The above lexical deficit situation is mostly felt by children and low literate adults. It requires urgent retooling solutions: one for illiterate adults, one for general adult use, and one for children and the formal school setting. Two models from other languages could be suitably adapted to Arabic.

9.2.2.1 A Dictionary of *Contemporary Arabic* The first 'project blueprint' concerns the *Collins Cobuild* (COLLINS Birmingham University International Language database), which was published in 1987 "for people who want to use modern English." The Collins Cobuild Dictionary offers more accurate information on the way modern English is used and provides textual evidence on more than 20 million words from books, magazines, newspapers, leaflets, conversations, and radio and television broadcasts. A similar dictionary is needed for Arabic. It could be based on existing Arabic databases which include words, phrases, sentences, and more information on the old and new uses of all Arabic lexical entries. This modern Arabic dictionary could also include all the varieties of Arabic, written and oral. This is of course a difficult language policy matter, but it could work if implemented in the context of one Arab country with the political will. One country could take the lead and the responsibility of developing an innovative language policy and implementing it in the schools.

9.2.2.2 An Arabic *Thematic Visual Dictionary* The second project blueprint is more important because it caters to the pressing concerns of Arab children. As previously explained, these children are confronted with the lack present-day Arabic words for numerous fields of knowledge, especially those which have developed outside of the Arab region and for which no generally accepted terminology has yet emerged. Arabic dictionaries, which are few and difficult to use because they are not alphabetically organized, can only approximate the degree of

completeness or precision found in comparable dictionaries and word-lists available for Western languages.

A study was conducted in the late sixties in the Maghreb by three teams of applied linguists in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. The study's objective was to identify the language used by school children (aged 6-12 in the three countries in order to assess their lexical needs and help the authors of primers with a "basic Arabic word list." Following Guggenheim's methodology for French in Le *Français fondamental*, the researchers completed a three-year survey of the language used by children in the three Maghreb countries. They tried to determine a list of "empty slots" representing useful and relatively frequent concepts taken from the daily life activities of children by comparing the list of *fusha* vocabulary used in existing primary school textbooks and the inventory of the most frequent colloquial words the survey identified. These vocabulary slots were empty because they had no equivalent lexical counterparts in *fusha*. The "Fundamental Arabic Project" revealed that Maghrebi children showed significant weakness in the vocabulary of their daily environment, mostly related to Arabic in general and *fusha* in particular. This vocabulary deficit was more noticeable in the rural areas where the impact of TV programs had low availability.

Because classical Arabic dictionaries are known for their inaccessibility, a good model for improving the vocabulary of Arab schoolchildren is Jean Claude Corbeil and Ariane Archambault's *Thematic Visual Dictionary (=TVD) Project*. The *TVD* comes also in a shorter version for schoolchildren, the *Visual Junior* (=*VJ*), developed in 1994. Both dictionaries are illustrated terminological tools, which use real-life images as an aid to word recognition. Because they are based on a selected number of themes and a corresponding number of entry-pages which contain a select number of related concepts, both *TVD* and *VJ* offer an easily accessible methodology where children can go look for the needed object without having to worry about its complexity. The methodology used enables children to be free in their research and provides practical and relevant learning concepts and relationships with the words needed to express them.

An *Arabic Thematic Visual Dictionary (=ATVD)*, adapted to the cultural needs of the Arab region would be an excellent lexical tool to help build confidence in Arab children by increasing their articulateness. An *ATVD* could come in a monolingual version using *Modern fusha* along with chosen Arabic colloquials. The countries of the Arab Maghreb Union could, for instance, describe their varying colloquial lexical uses and include all their linguistic diversity in the same database shell. Since the original *TVD* Project has already more than fifteen partner languages, which share its computerized graphic and terminological databases, joining the project, will give the *ATVD* (and the Arabic language) numerous bilingual and multilingual combinations. An *ATVD* could be

used by children and teachers in schools to gain a better linguistic awareness of their collective linguistic identity.

10. 0 Conclusion: Future of diglossia and future of Arabic

Speaking about the Arabic language in Egypt today, Parkinson (1991) summarized the serious plight in which Arabic found itself and stressed the prevailing feeling of confusion which still surrounded it. Parkinson (1991:60) observed that Egyptians, and Arabs in general,

> . . . are not of one mind when it comes to their formal language. They disagree about what to call the form, about what varieties should constitute the form in particular settings or uses, and even about how a single text should be performed. Their experts and academies take the ideological position that medieval and modern varieties should be one and then proceed, as a matter of policy to confound the two forms in a way that ignores the actual modern standards of usage that are normally adhered to by professional writers and users of the form.

In spite of important contributions from the academies and individual Arab scholars, and in spite of the institutional backing of Arab governments and pan-Arab institutions such as ALECSO, the situation of the language and its place and role in the Arab educational setting need full reconsideration. A policy of educational development in the Arab region that does not take into account the Arabic language and its impact on educational quality and the results of schooling may be shortsighted and may even fail to represent an optimal policy for economic and cultural growth in the region. Two questions remain to be answered. They concern the future of the Arabic language and the future of Arabic diglossia.

10.1 What is the future of Arabic? It would be naive to assume that Arabs, even educated Arabs, would be speaking to each other and communicating in one common form of *Modern fusha* in any near future without heavy and consistent investment by Arab governments and other concerned institutions and groups in the implementation of a common language policy. It would be more realistic to conclude that this is no easy matter and that probably no policy would materialize unless individual governments and groups take matters into their own hands and decide to act.

Fifty years ago or so, Ferguson (1959:381) made a prediction about the next stages of Arabic diglossia, the emergence of the ideal Arabic of the future and the way this could come about. Ferguson wrote that the

Arabic of the future would not be a form of *colloquial* Arabic. He predicted that it would be a *modern* slightly streamlined form of Classical Arabic, purified of all regionalism or of excessive foreign vocabulary, and ignoring some of the subtleties of traditional Arabic grammar. Though the validity of Ferguson's prediction is still difficult to debate at the moment, his views about the purity of the emerging Arabic norms and standards does not seem to hold. The linguistic situation in the Arab region seems to be slowly moving towards the realization of these new Arabic standards but the move is only happening with the obvious and significant help of Arabic colloquials. The linguistic spread of colloquial Arabic all over the Arab region will eventually lead to the necessary reform of the Arabic language standards used in the Arab educational structure. The sooner reforms of this type are introduced, the better the development of the region will be on both the human and economic levels.

10.2 What is the future of Arabic diglossia? If education of common Arabs continues in the same vein and with the same low quality results, a widening of the diglossic gap is a quite reasonable possibility. In the foreseeable future, perhaps in the next 2 to 3 decades, the diglossic situation in the Arab region could continue to produce dramatically wider ranges of linguistic distance between the various Arabic colloquials and *fusha*. The fracturing of the internal structure and dynamics of the Arabic language continuum will have important consequences in the field of education. One of these consequences could be the growing use of colloquials in formal and non-formal education and in other numerous daily activities. However, *modern fusha* would still play an important, though slowly diminishing, role even though next generations of Arabs would not be any more adept at using it than their parents. The impact of this on the future of Arab education cannot be considered in optimistic terms.

Another question relates to whether Arabic diglossia really constitutes a critical variable for the spread of literacy and the quality of basic education in the Arab region or whether socioeconomic factors override most of the elements that relate to the general impact of the Arabic language on educational attainment and achievement. This author's claim is that even though it cannot by itself bear all the blame for the crisis in Arab education, Arabic diglossia is a definite aggravating factor in the low results of schooling and non-formal instruction and taking care of it, if at all possible, would greatly improve the quality of education in the region.

Unlike recent diglossic situations, such as the English one reflected in the Ebonics issue for instance, Arabic diglossia will not react to the usual antidotes used to remedy low quality education and the failure of the schooling system. In their study on the appearance of diglossia in Tchekoslovakia, Peter Sgall and Jiri V. Neustupny (1989) claim that the

alleviation of poverty and the promotion of better secioeconomic life conditions can alone help eliminate the emergence of any diglossic situation. This would not be possible in the case of Arabic diglossia however, since this phenomenon affects all the classes of Arab societies without discrimination. Only urgent and appropriate language planning decisions, better language instruction, more schooling, and whenever possible, the additional provision of improved socioeconomic conditions, could bring good and useful results.

Since the nature of educational reform and change is complex, lengthy and dynamic, rapid developments should not be expected soon on the Arab educational scene. It may even take generations to achieve an Arabic language policy and practice that would change the nature of Arabic instruction and turn it from a bar to an open door to learning and better living conditions in the whole Arab region.

NOTES

1. In Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia Arabic found itself, in the forefront of a clash between two antagonistic cultures in a dichotomous relationship between traditionalism, which meant an identification with the Arabic-Islamic values, and modernity, which was interpreted by western standards and represented the scientific and technological advances of the West. C.A. Gallagher (1964), M. Maamouri (1973), C.A. Micaud (1974) R.M.Payne (1977), D.F. Murphy (1977), A. Chettaoui (1978), G. Grandguillaume (1979) and a few others have given accounts of the political ideologies underlying the emergence of the Arabic language as the champion of Arab identity and the symbol of a unification behind a common set of 'national' behaviors and myths, which mostly focused on linguistic hegemony and nation-building efforts in the North African countries.

2. The reforms of Arabic under the conceptual label of Arabization led to the early creation of three important Arabic language academies in the region: Damascus in 1919; Cairo in 1932 (with real implementation in 1934); and Baghdad in 1947. These three academies produced a prolific amount of terminology and considerable neological production in Arabic, but these efforts are neither widely known by the Arab public nor put to any obvious use in the everyday life of Arabs.

3. S. Altoma (1970:693) reports that Al-Bazzaaz, a leading Arab statesman and former Iraqi prime minister, outlined in 1961 a language planning program entitled "*Fusha*, the title of our unity" in which he made suggestions for the imposition of Classical Arabic and strict measures to restrict the use or study of the colloquials

4. S. Badawi (1973), M. Maamouri (1973), S. El-Hassan (1977), G. Meiselles (1980), M. Youssef (1984), T. Mitchell (1986) and many others described this type of 'hybrid' language which is the result of the code-mixing and code-switching activities made necessary by the communicative needs of Arab speakers when they cannot keep to the use of only one language variant of their dichotomous Arabic language situation.

5. Karl Krumbacher first used the term to describe Greek in 1902 (in Sotiropoulos, 1977:10) and William Marçais used it for Arabic in 1930 (in M.R.Zughoul, 1980). Both scholars identified the phenomenon as a language problem. Charles A. Ferguson gave 'diglossia' its most satisfying definition in 1959 and applied it to a description of Greek, Arabic, Swiss German and Haitian Creole situations. Hundreds of articles and books have been published on the subject (Cf. M. Fernandez, 1993).

6. The Chinese language illustrates an advanced type of diglossia in which the dialects of a same 'language' (most probably tthe 'ancestor language' of today's Mandarin Chinese) do not seem to be mutually

understandable anymore. The diglossic situation of English is the 'mildest' one because it is a relatively recent situation. It impact on education for instance, does not compare to the impact of the other two situations.

7. Ferguson's classical definition of diglossia (1959:336) is as follows: '...a relatively stable language situation, in which in addition to the primary dialects of the language, which may include a standard or regional standards, there is a very divergent, highly codified, often grammatically more complex, superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation."

8. See Salih J. Altoma's (1969) *The Problem of Diglossia in Arabic* which consists of a complete and excellent comparison of phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical comparison between *fusha* Arabic and the colloquial form spoken in Iraq.

9. This term is used by Parkinson (1991) in his article "Searching for Modern *fusha*. It has also been used in 1976 by the Bourguiba Institute of Modern Languages in Tunis to 'market' the specific linguistic reality of *'arabiyya muᶜaasira* to its non-Arab learners in its world-known summer intensive program.

10. Nagib Mahfouz, the Egyptian Nobel Prize writer and Béchir Khraief among others have used the colloquial in their novels to add realism and life to their stories. B. Khraif wrote a daring article on the 'danger of the *fusha* for the colloquial' in which he expressed the lack of immediacy and pertinence characterizing the formal language of literature.

11. In an Internet online discussion of the translatability of the Quranic text, on June 11, 1998 (Arabic Info Server), Hamid T. Ouyachchi gives all the Quranic references to the 'linguistic election' of the Arabic language. The Quran references itself as *'lisaanun ᶜarabiyyun mubiin* (an eloquent Arabic tongue) in (*Bees*, v.103), also (*Poets*, v. 195), (*Al-ahqaf*, v.12), etc. The venerable a-Shafiᶜi, Fiqh al-lugha, writes: *"wa l-ᶜarabu khayru 'al 'umami, wa 'al-ᶜarabiyyatu khayru l-lughaati wa-l'alsinati"* ("The Arabs are the best of all nations; and Arabic is the best of all languages and tongues"). Ouyachchi adds the *hadith* (whether authentic or not) which says: " . . . love the Arabs for three reasons: because I am Arab, and the Qur'an is Arab, and the Language of the dwellers in Paradise is Arab."

12. See Claire-Blanche Benveniste, 1994.

13. A quote from Taha Hussein (1954:89), a prominent contemporary Egyptian writer, illustrates this position quite well: "Like almost

everyone else, I should like teachers to use Classical Arabic in every class regardless of the course, but I am reluctant to insist because they do not know the language well enough and, if required to speak it, would fail to communicate the subject matter to their pupils."(In Altoma, 1970, p. 691.)

14. See Parkinson, 1991.

15. Mohamed Jabeur, is a Tunsian sociolinguist from the Bourguiba Institute of Modern Languages, University of Tunis, who has worked on dialectal variation in the town of Radès, Tunisia. The research referred to in this study was part of an oral seminar presentation. No information on publication date can be provided at the present time.

16. See Edward L. Palmer, 1993. *Toward a Literate World: Television in Literacy Education--Lessons from the Arab region.* Westview Press. Oxford & Boulder.

17. It was rumored at a Unicef-MENARO meeting in Cairo in 1996, that USAID was considering giving support to another CTW initiative for a children's TV program in Egypt.

18. John Sabatini's article "Toward a framework for adult reading acquisition research: a psychological perspective" will be published in the forthcoming *Literacy: An International Handbook*, editors Daniel A. Wagner, Brian V. Street and Richard L. Venesky. Garland Publishing, New York This reference book will be published in the fall of 1998.

19. Ibid, page 3.

20. Ibid, Page 4.

21. See Perfetti, 1986, pages 36-37.

22. See Youssif, 1981:82 .

23. See Abu-Absi, 1991:115.

24. See Stevenson, Stigler, Lucker, Lee, Hsu and Kitamura, 1982.

25. See Parkinson, 1990.

26. See Parkinson, 1981:80.

27. In Maamouri 1983:151.

28. In previous research findings which seem to still apply, Ounali

(1970) and Z. Riahi (1970) show that a very high percentage of Tunisian high school and college students prefer to read in French instead of *fusha* whenever they have a choice. Though Youssef (1981:80) confirmed a decade later this aversion Arab readers seem to have towards reading in *fusha*, this sensitive question certainly requires further research.

29. Quoted in Altoma, 1970:703.

30. See Altoma, 1978.

31. Altoma (1978) mentions some of these terminological reforms included such novel terms such as *musnad* (predicate) and *musnad 'ilayh* (subject) to replace the three traditional terms of *faa'il* (subject), *mubtadaa* (subject of a nominal sentence), and *naa'ib faa'il* (subject of a passive verb).

32. Cf. Al-Khuli, 1961.

33. In Altoma, 1970:712.

34. Cf. Zaki, 1953:93.

35. Cf. Husayn, 1976, and Abu-Absi, 1986.

36. Cf. Youssef, 1981:82.

37. Dalia Abbas (1998) *The Stories behind the ALTP*, (compiled and written by Dalia Abbas), ALTP Project, 1995-1998. The British Council. Cairo, Egypt.

38. Commenting on the continuing and stubborn attitudes of rejection shown by most educated Arabs to the systematic use of the necessary vocalic diacritics available in the Arabic writing system, Mahmoud Taymour (1951), one of the most prominent Arabic script reformers of this century, calls this "an unfortunate and misguided conception amongst the educated classes - a strange complex against diacritical points and a sense of superiority to them." Taymour (1951:16) notes that "to present an educated man with a book printed with diacritical points has come to be regarded as something in the nature of an insult, and an imputation of ignorance of the rules of syntax and conjugation!" Taymour advised against the "conceit" of such empty posturing.

39. Ahmed Lakhdhar Ghazal devised in 1982 two simplified systems of Arabic Orthography: ASV-CODAR (for *Arabe Standard Voyollé* for "Vocalized Standard Arabic" and the CODAR-U/FD *Codage Arabe Unifié* for "Unified Arabic Coding System." IERA, Rabat.
40. See *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, Preface, v.

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